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UNDER THE SKIN

BY

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"The squire's lady and Judy O'Grady
Are sisters under the skin."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

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UNDER THE SKIN

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

A CHILD OF THE WILDS.

The turgid waters of the lordly Kubanda rolled their misty depths towards the majestic Congo, seven hundred miles below. On either bank, far as the eye could reach, clustered great groves of kumba-trees, while, here and there, a gigantic kokkorokoo raised its mighty head a hundred feet above the verdant sward. Nearer at hand, crowding themselves to the very brink of the river, rose aromatic ginger reeds; their haunting fragrance adding a touch of dreamy unreality to this wild scene of wood and water, of wonderful wild-flowers and wasted beauty.

Nature was lavish with her splendor, but none was there to admire it; none save the clumsy guinea-fowl, who, as he flopped heavily from one bough to another, or stooped to gather some dainty morsel from the ever-generous earth, called incessantly for his mate. No human eye would pay its tribute of adoration; no human heart—— But wait!——

Around the upper bend of the river glided a tiny craft. The plaything of the waters, it, nevertheless, displayed a will of its own, as if some guiding spirit directed its course. And so it proved; for, crouched in the stern of the boat, a tiny figure now appeared to view, a single paddle trailing in the water behind.

Above the hardly audible rustle of the leaves could

barely be distinguished the soft cooing of a girl's high soprano, in a voice distinctly rich, notwithstanding the uninflected, unmodulated sound of the language in which it was rendered. The chorus, which alone was wholly distinct, might be approximately translated,—

"Spirit of Light, accept a maiden's vows,
Keep me from ill, and shield me from the night."

A deft movement of the paddle shot the boat towards the bank, at the mouth of a small rivulet which was partly concealed by the dense growth around. In a moment the occupant had tied the boat to a root jutting out above the water, and scrambled agilely up the bank.

She was a slight child, hardly more than twelve years of age. Her only garment was a skirt of genet skin, reaching from the waist to half-way above the knees. The rest of her body was bare, and of a light, chocolate hue. Her hair, thick and curled, could hardly be termed woolly, and fell in long, black rolls over her shoulders. Her features were regular and well-formed, a straight nose and gently-curved mouth, with lips not noticeably thick, giving her countenance a rather Semitic appearance. Her limbs were round and plump, and her every movement exhibited the elastic agility of untrammelled youth.

Yet Ubaba, only daughter of Ntikkigama, king of Kubanda, was an African, of unadulterated blood since the time when Central Africa was first separated from the rest of the world by impassable oceans, and from the rest of Africa by equally impassable forests.

Still crooning her prayer-song, Ubaba plunged deeper into the thicket, ever and anon reappearing with armful after armful of the fairest, sweetest blossoms. At length the bottom of her boat was covered with flowers, then once more she resumed her place in the stern of the craft, pointed its nose up stream, and was off. Now,

however, her task was greater, for she had to battle against the current. But Ubaba was no novice at rowing, and her frail craft made remarkable progress on its course. It was in an incredibly short time, and the girl showed no sign of fatigue, when the boat grated against the small wooden quay two miles up the river, and Ubaba sprang lightly ashore.

Gathering her wealth of flowers in her arms, she walked lithely along the narrow beaten path that led to her home, half-a-mile from the river.

The ground through which she passed was carefully tilled. Here vast acres of teleboon-corn stretched away towards the distant sky-line; there, an equally expansive field of maize adjoined. Great groves of plantains blocked her way, their heads bent low with their noble loads of golden fruit. Fields of yam, and cassava, and sweet potato stretched forth on either hand. Yonder, in the distance, the palm-trees raised their lovely fronds to heaven, while, more beautiful than all, the stately zawa-tree, its stem jet-black, lifted its cylindrical crown of narrow, quivering blades, smooth as polished mahogany, towards that sun which had witnessed no nobler tree, the while its flowers perfumed the air with a purer, richer fragrance than ever graced the rose.

Ubaba sniffed the exhilarating aroma, and as her eye sped over the entrancing view that surrounded her, once more she raised her voice in song,—this time the wild medley of words and melody indicating the emanations of a soul entirely happy.

Before her was a group of huts, tall and symmetrical, their pointed roofs covered with straw. Great barns built of clay stood just behind each hut, while in front, on pegs, on trees, or on poles, hung every conceivable armament of war or of the chase, and several of the trophies of the latter. Towards the largest of these huts, the *mbanga* of her father, Ubaba directed her steps.

The palace of Ntikkigama differed only in size from

the residences of lesser persons. The roof was straw-covered, and the walls of clay. The doors were woven, mat-like, from the giant blades of the popukky grass, and the floor was of clay, rolled level and trampled hard.

The building was divided into several rooms, each set apart for a special purpose. That into which Ubaba entered might be termed the pantry, for here an elderly woman was directing a couple of younger ones in the art of making some mysterious salad, in which mushrooms, kumba-pepper, and zawa-oil played no small part.

"Have you returned already, child?" queried the woman turning to the intruder.

"Yes, and, oh mamma, look at the beautiful flowers I have brought," cried Ubaba in breathless ecstasy. "Are they not lovely? Smell them," and she raised a handful to her mother's face.

"They are, my child," replied the mother kindly, "and they do honor to your purpose. May they never fade!" She kissed the lips the girl held up to her. "Now sprinkle them with fresh water, and commence to string them. Anon I shall return to help you, but first I must glance at the girls in the fields, for I have left them over long, and know not what they may be doing."

With a last loving glance, she tore herself from her daughter, and darted towards the fields; for the responsibilities of royalty are everywhere enormous, and nowhere in any modern kingdom has any queen an affair of state more incumbent upon her than was the duty of this dusky potentate to supervise the slaves tilling her husband's plantations.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

Alali, mother of Ubaba, was not of the tribe to which her husband, Ntikkigama, belonged. Descended from royal Ibani stock, she could claim connection with nearly all the leading tribes of West Central Africa, and seemed to inherit most of the virtues and few of the vices of these singular peoples.

Considering her advantages and her surroundings, she must be conceded a woman of high ideals, of remarkable tact and initiative, and of a kindliness and fidelity which made all her friends her slaves, and led her husband, himself one of the noblest princes of the Niam-niam, almost to worship her. And in her only child it had always been her hope and ambition to see all her ideals realized. All that was noblest, holiest, purest, had ever been taught to the child since her earliest days, so that now she seemed to embody whatever was most worthy in the various African tribes, with as few of their blemishes as an anxious mother could not exclude.

When Alali returned to the mbanga, Ubaba, closeted in her room, had already completed several wreaths of the beautiful flowers. The mother surveyed the entire scene with a smile of pride and satisfaction, then seated herself on a little stool beside her daughter, and, gathering up a handful of blossoms, began to assist in weaving them into wreaths.

Of a darker hue than her child, though not entirely black, the royal lady had the same regular features, the same black, sparkling eyes, the same milk-white teeth unaffected by the popular custom of filing them to points, and the same long, flowing, jet-black hair. Unlike the

other women of the community, who wore only a skin below the waist, Alali wore a complete coat of colobus skins of the richest variety, made into one piece like a large apron, and reaching from her neck to her knee, with holes cut for the arms. Naturally, she wore a string of beads around her neck, and bracelets of iron around her wrists and arms, but neither her lips nor her nose were mutilated by the horrible African practice of boring and distending these to admit further adornments.

Her voice was rich and musical as she spoke to her child in that subdued, confidential tone which can never fail to gain a daughter's complete confidence.

"To-morrow," she was saying, without lifting her eyes from the string of flowers on which she was laboring, "you will be a woman. Thirteen years will you be, and your childhood will end, but not your sorrows. Hence it has been the custom among our people to have our daughters dedicate themselves to the great Gumbah for his protection. I have told you all this before, but I must now repeat it for the last time, since you will not, to-morrow, longer listen to me as a daughter."

"Ah, mother, be not unkind," answered Ubaba, a great tear dangling in her sparkling eye. "My mother you will ever be; the dearest, sweetest mother that has ever been."

"Have I been unkind?" asked the mother tenderly. "Ah, no, Ubaba; I judged you not as other maidens. But it is meet that to-morrow when you stand before the Great Light, you do so with a full knowledge of your responsibilities. Have you practised the hymns that you will sing?"

"I did, my mother. Even to-day on the river and in the woods I sang them, and I know them perfectly. Shall I sing them to you?"

"Later, my child. I have other things to talk about

now, which it is important that you should understand and remember for ever.''

She paused, and Ubaba answered,

''I am listening, my mother.''

''It is customary,'' Alali continued, ''for our maidens to remain in the house of the Great Light for four years. There they are safe from the evils of life; they are protected from the impurity of the world, and dishonor affects them not. But with you it will be different. The holy priestesses have agreed that, considering the devotion of your parents and the protection of your home, you shall return in four days, with the blessing of the Great Light resting upon your head, and the full rites of Bundu conferred upon you.''

''It were so hard to be separated from you, my mother, and from my noble father for four long years,'' sighed Ubaba. ''And, mother, I will be good.''

''I believe it, my child,'' replied the mother, ''else, even with our love of you, we had not asked it. But listen to me.''

''Say it, my mother,'' Ubaba murmured.

''Remember, then, that always, your honor is the noblest thing you have. Guard it rather than your life, for love, and truth, and purity live after death. The curse of the great Gumbah,—the Great Light,—goes upon the impure. Would you have your father's curse, your mother's curse, upon your head?''

''Nay, my mother; your blessing, rather, and my father's. I am ever your child.''

''Among our people,'' the mother continued, ''this has ever been the law: No man, save only her father, shall ever touch an unwed maid, nay, not so much as her little finger. The touch of any, except it be to rescue her from mortal peril, shall be a pollution, and only in the blood of the transgressor shall the indignity be wiped out. Do you comprehend all that the command implies?''

''I do, my mother. Believe me, the immutable laws

of the house of Kubanda shall never be defied by the daughter of Ntikkigama. Kiss me, my mother."

"But there is more," Alali proceeded, reseating herself after the solicited caress. "Some day some chief will desire to make you his bride. Let him be noble and brave and true, and then to him you shall go, noble, brave and true also. None else shall have you."

"My mother, I shall never wed."

"Nonsense, child! What do you mean?" cried Alali. "To become the bride of some worthy man is the noblest ambition, the highest good, the real destiny of every true woman. To mother his sons; to see them grow to manhood, noble and brave like their father, and feel that they are part of her own blood and body, this is the highest honor, the fullest satisfaction, the purest joy life affords. Ubaba, you will not suffer the house of Ntikkigama to be extinguished."

"Your wish is my law, my mother," Ubaba answered. "Your word will guide me."

"It is well," sighed Alali. "The noblest, the purest, the bravest shall you have;—one of our own people. I love not the neighbors. The Mabode and the Monbuttoo are savages, and eat each other. The Bongo herds a harem of wives, and cannot give to you the devotion due to a bride. The Mittoo, the Congo, the Ibo, the Dinka, they are all alike. No, whoever he be, he shall love you only, and to him shall you go pure and unpolluted, and pure and unpolluted in his home must you ever remain, for he alone shall be your lord. But of that there will yet be time to speak, and of much else. I hear the beating of the drums. Let us go out to hail your father's return."

Ubaba sprang from her seat, and, seizing her mother's hand, led her to meet the approaching party. A company of about fifty men, at their head Ntikkigama, followed by a number of slaves and bearers, emerged from the woods, and approached the mbanga. A wild,

uproarious drumbeating, accompanied by laughter, song, and shouting, announced the successful return of some royal hunting party.

In an open space fifty yards from the royal hut, the bearers deposited the spoils. A dozen antelopes, two buffaloes, a boar, an elephant, and, set apart by itself near the chief, a magnificent lion, besides a quantity of smaller game, constituted the bag.

The king carefully supervised the division of the spoils before he would let domestic affairs enter into his mind. Then he turned to his wife, whom he greeted with the utmost devotion and solicitude. Ubaba he lifted in his great muscular arms, and kissed affectionately on the forehead. Then setting her down beside the lion, he pointed to the noble beast, and said:

"The king of the forest, from the king of Kubanda to the Princess Ubaba, for a sacrifice to the King of Creation, on her assumption of the sacred vow of Bundu. May the princess be protected!"

Ubaba kissed her father's hand, then bent beside the dead lion to examine it more closely.

"You have not marred his hide?" Alali asked with quick concern.

The chief glanced proudly up at her.

"No true Zandey hurls dart or trumbash * at the sacrificial beast," he said. "I crept upon him in his lair, and clubbed him ere he sprang."

She kissed her husband's cheek, and thanked him for his thoughtfulness of their child. A few minutes later the party entered the hut, where a steaming supper was now awaiting.

* Trumbash.—A missile used among the Niam-niam, consisting of several pieces of iron with sharp points, so fastened together that the points stick out in all directions.

CHAPTER III.

ONE OF THE BUNDU.

The village of Bakinji stood in a fertile plain on the southern bank of the Kubanda River, and had, at the time, a population of over five thousand souls.

Principally of the Zandey (or Niam-niam) tribe, they had intermarried with the Monbuttoo to the east, the Mabode to the south, the Mittoo, Bongo, Dinka, Congo, and other surrounding and distant tribes, till they retained comparatively few of the original Zandey traits; —for the Central African always counted it to his credit to obtain a wife from as distant a tribe as was possible, perhaps on account of the dangers it involved,—the Zandey being naturally an adventurer,—but more probably to be far from his mother-in-law, who was permitted to collect almost perpetual levy from his property.

Several outlying villages, each with a chief of its own, also did homage, and paid their tribute of ivory and elephants' flesh to Ntikkigama at Bakinji, he being by descent as well as by power of arms, the supreme chief, or king of Kubanda.

On the western limit of the village, an open space of several acres had been cleared, and surrounded by a strong palisade of pointed stakes. Within this enclosure were the sacred temple and the huts of the Bundu.

In several parts of Africa, but more especially among the Western tribes, girls, varying in age from twelve to fifteen years according to the tribe, were dedicated to the service of some ruling divinity, and kept in seclusion in close proximity to his temple, for a period, varying in different localities, of from two to six years. They

were known as the Bundu, or Sacred Virgins. A system somewhat similar was also applied to boys, though the period of seclusion was generally shorter.

The discipline of the Bundu was extremely strict. Supported by their relatives, who brought, daily, supplies of meat and vegetables to the gate of their convent, they were allowed no communications except among themselves. Their mornings and evenings were spent in sacrifices and hymns to their acknowledged deity, but the rest of the day was devoted to instruction in deportment, and in the crafts which the girls, as women, would have to perform;—among the Kubandans, pottery, wood-carving, basket-making, cooking, agriculture, and hair-dressing,—for no women on earth take more pride in their hair, or spend more time in arranging it.

No male animal of any kind was ever permitted to enter the sacred enclosure alive, and even after the girls were liberated from their monastic life, any familiarity on the part of any man was punishable by the summary execution of the culprit. Indeed, the chastity and modesty of African maidens, even in sections where there is almost unlimited polygamy or complete nudity, has long been proverbial.

The following morning, Ubaba, dressed solely in garlands of milk-white blossoms, left her father's hut for the temple of Gumbah. Before her, twelve maidens, slightly younger than herself, with heads and bodies bedecked with flowers, bore a mat supported on six poles, on which reposed the carcass of the lion that was to be sacrificed. Alali walked beside her child, followed by two slaves bearing baskets of presents for the priestesses. Behind these came a long procession of women, the wives of the chiefs whose daughters bore the sacrificial offering.

At the gate to the enclosure, the procession halted. The bearers deposited their burden, bowed to the candidate, and retraced their steps in silence. The matrons

followed them. Only Alali remained with her child. The gates opened, and two priestesses, followed by a choir of chanting maidens, emerged from within.

Alali kissed the girl.

"The Light be upon you to protect you," she muttered softly, then delivered her to the priestesses, and, turning back, was soon out of sight.

Twelve of the Bundu had by this time lifted the carcass of the lion, and, following them slowly, Ubaba, a priestess on either arm, marched into the temple of her God.

Four days later another procession formed at the same gate; but, unlike the former, it was boisterous and noisy. Drums and guitars, with singing and shouting and the clanging of sticks, added to the commotion. All were happy, and at the head of the procession, escorted by a number of women older than herself, Ubaba tripped and danced merrily. She was now clothed from neck to knee in a great robe of skin,—the skin of the lion that had been sacrificed.

At the mbanga a great feast had been prepared in honor of the returning princess, and a crowd had assembled to welcome her. Late into the night the party ate, and drank (for the Kubandans brew a very drinkable beer from the teleboon-corn), and danced, and sang, and built massive bonfires, and had a riotously good time. This celebration, the borru-dance, or prayer-dance, was never omitted on any occasion on which the Central African felt that thanks should be rendered to the superior spirits.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGER

Tropical children are proverbially precocious. Where, therefore, custom as well as nature makes the transition from girlhood into womanhood almost instantaneous, without any provisions for a period of adolescence, it is not unusual to discover a complete change of demeanor in any young person within a comparatively short time.

Ubaba, a few weeks after her initiation into the order of Bundu, had assumed all the responsibilities of maturity, and was as different from the thoughtless, trusting child of a month before as it is possible for the woman to differ from the girl, her predecessor.

True, she retained her happy smile, her merry, laughing eyes, and her innate kindness of heart that had endeared her to all. But her marked taciturnity, and more than ever her desire for seclusion, pointed unmistakably to the change. For days she would wander about the woods, or lounge in the dense shades of the forest, accompanied at times by her maid, Piriba, a young slave somewhat older than herself, whom her father had relegated to the task of waiting solely upon the young princess. At other times she took with her only "Tum-tum," a little dog that she had petted and fondled and teased and taught, till it could read her wishes with almost human perception. But more often than not, she would take these rambles in utter solitude, and communicate with the vast society of untamed nature about her in monologues, or songs, or silent day-dreams. And at night she would sit by her mother's side, recounting to her the various adventures of her day, showing some new treasure of beauty she had unearthed, or

seeking a solution of one of the ever-increasing mysteries which confronted her.

One morning Ubaba went down to the river alone, as she so often did. With the supple agility of a water-nymph, she swam about for more than an hour, making several trips from bank to bank. She at length emerged from the water, resumed her dress, and was proceeding into the thicket, when a queer sound arrested her attention. The sound was almost immediately repeated, and Ubaba wondered what it was. Peering in the direction from whence it came, she could distinguish a thin cloud of smoke rising from the dense forest; and, in the belief that some of her people had made a fire there, she walked boldly in that direction.

Her progress was slow, for the heavy undergrowth of thorns and creepers everywhere intercepted her path. At length, however, she reached a spot which had recently been trampled by some animal, and as she looked around, she saw, not six paces away, the body of a huge wild boar, lying still. A second glance assured her that the animal was dead, and she carelessly approached it. Then she paused suddenly, looked more carefully, and sprang towards the beast. For, lying beneath it was the prostrate body of a man.

With all her strength, Ubaba tugged at the unwieldy beast, and inch by inch removed it from the body beneath. Then, without another glance at the monster of the forest,—for wild boars were almost daily sights,—she turned to survey the more wonderful creature which lay motionless below.

The face and hands were of a grayish white. The hair was black, thin and straight. The entire body and limbs were covered with some soft, pliable fabric, and the feet, too, were clothed in some black skin, from which the hair had been removed. Lying on the ground near-by, was a long, black weapon of iron, one end hollow,

and the other, bent and enlarged, covered with some polished wood.

Ubaba gasped with wonder at the strange spectacle, and looked around to make sure she was awake. True, she had heard that there were white men, but like the other fairy tales that had been told to her in her childhood, she had long discarded these stories as pure invention. Various old African myths had often been repeated to her, all of which depicted white men as unnatural, inhuman creatures, the inveterate enemies of the negro races, and capable of untold barbarities.

These old myths immediately recurred to the girl, and she recollected that if this were really a white man, then it was a creature to be loathed and avoided. She bent over the figure to examine more closely the strange color of the skin, and as she did so, she caught the low hissing of his breath. Apparently he was not dead, as she had at first supposed. Instinctively her loathing fled, and in its place there sprang up pity for the lone creature, who, though barbarous and detestable, as she had been taught, must yet be far from his home and his friends, and be in need of aid.

With quick intuition she dragged part of the torn clothing from the man's body. Across his white, hairy chest a great gash had been cut by the tusk of the ferocious beast, while a similar wound, extending from the shoulder to the elbow of the right hand, almost separated the flesh from the bone. But wounds or blood could not sicken Ubaba. She was a chieftain's daughter among a savage tribe, and several times she had aided in tending the wounded hunters or warriors of her people.

Plucking a large leaf, she ran to a little brook that trickled by, and, filling it with water, she hurried back, and poured it on the stranger's wounds. Again and again did she repeat this performance, till the bleeding had been stopped, and the clotted blood removed. Then,

gathering some balsamic herbs that grew around, the efficacy of which she must have known from past experience, she pounded the tender leaves on a large stone till they became a juicy pulp. With this she completely covered the wounds, then, tearing some bark from a plantain tree that stood a little way off, she carefully, and not unskilfully, bandaged them up. She poured more water on the face, and, seating herself on the carcass of the boar, awaited further developments, while she pondered over the mystery.

What could she do? Some feeling of womanly pity stirred her breast for this unfortunate creature of another world who had come to her father's country to die. Yet, how could she help him? Somehow, she felt that he was human like herself, for only his color was distinctly unhuman, and even among her own countrymen had she seen persons of various shades of color, though nothing so unnatural as this. Yet she knew that should she take him among her people, they would kill him as they would an antelope. She dared not do that. She would save him at any cost, but before she could think of taking him to the mbanga of her father, she must first learn her mother's opinion of white men.

After a long period of patient waiting, the man slowly opened his eyes. Ubaba sprang beside him, for she was strangely unafraid of this queer creature. He did not see her at first, but slowly consciousness dawned upon him, and immediately his eyes fell upon the bandages which swathed his wounds.

Instinctively a cry of surprise escaped him, and he turned his eyes to see who was his nurse. There she stood beside him in all the beauty of childish simplicity. Her scant robe, enveloping her body in its cylindrical fold, robbed her form of that perfect symmetry it should exhibit, but nothing could rob her carriage of that proud grace nature had bestowed upon it, as she stood over him like some benignant angel, her hands behind her

back, and her brilliant eyes beaming with sympathetic curiosity. For one moment a single ray of sunlight beamed through the towering boughs, and laved her swarthy features in a sea of gold. Forgetting his wounds, the stranger gazed at the unfamiliar creature, lost in wonder. Then he muttered a few low words in a language Ubaba had never heard before, though she could converse in most of the dialects of the surrounding tribes. The maiden guessed, however, what the first thoughts of the man must be, and pointed to the carcass of the boar.

His eyes followed her finger, and he closed them for a minute, while he tried to recollect.

"Oh," he said at last, slowly recovering himself, and speaking the Zandey dialect with difficulty. "I know now. I am in Ntikkigama's country, am I not?"

"Yes," replied the girl, both pleased and surprised that the stranger could speak in her tongue, "in blessed Kubanda."

"Blessed indeed," the man admitted. "And may I ask who is my generous nurse and only friend?"

"Ntikkigama's daughter," replied the maid simply. "But who are you, and whence do you come? Men like you dwell not in these parts."

"You are my friend?" the man repeated.

"I am," she replied. "And you?"

"May I presume to name myself the friend and protégé of Ntikkigama's daughter?" said the man, extending his left and unwounded hand towards the maid.

"You know not the law of our country, though you speak its tongue," cried the girl, springing back and assuming an air of distant formality, "else you would know it were pollution to me and death to you had your finger so much as touched me."

"Have I already angered you, my princess?" asked the man penitently, for it was plain that he was not

aware of the moral code of the country, and still misunderstood the maiden. "I am sorry, and must make atonement. My life is yours, for you have saved it. Will you take it? I shall not resist."

"You are a brave warrior," said the girl, to whom bravery had ever been extolled as the leading qualification of manhood. "You are a brave warrior, but a simple one to misunderstand me. Such has ever been the law of our land, and I but reminded you to warn you. The daughter of Ntikkigama can neither bring shame upon herself, nor death upon her friend."

"Ah, I understand you now," answered the stranger, "and I thank you both for the reminder and for the double assurance of friendship. I shall not forget your warning."

"It is enough," Ubaba answered. "But of yourself; —what of your hurts?"

"I hardly remembered them, lady, thanks to your kind ministrations. But with your leave I shall examine them."

"Nay," cried the girl, "you must not yet remove the dressing. Let it work its magic rather."

"It is as you shall decide, princess. But where did you get this water? I feel as if I could drink the river dry."

Without answering, she ran to the little stream, and soon returned with a leaf full of the clear, sparkling fluid. She held it to his lips while he swallowed great refreshing gulps.

"That's better now," he breathed with a deep sigh of satisfaction. "As for this scratch, I shall soon be well again. Many worse have I borne, yet not even their memory remains. Still, it was a close shave. But I got him."

She pointed questioningly to the boar, and he nodded.

"Perhaps you could sit up now, and tell me how it happened," she suggested.

"Why, of course I can," he replied, and tried to sit

up. Ubaba assisted him, then placed a pillow of grass and boughs against his back.

"I was coming down the river alone in a little boat," said the stranger, "and as I was short of provisions, I decided to make a brief stop and try to get some game. I drew up my boat on the bank, and, taking my gun, made off into the woods. I soon spied a young antelope, and was just about to fire when I heard a rustling of the leaves, and, looking, saw the boar not six paces away, making straight at me. I emptied both barrels into his forehead almost simultaneously, and must have killed him with the first shot, but his mad momentum brought him down upon me like a tornado before I was able to get out of his way. His long tusks ripped me here and there in his convulsive death struggles; and his great bulk, combined with my own loss of blood, pressed the consciousness out of me. But for your aid, I believe he would have got me."

"Is this your spear?" she asked, raising the queer weapon from the ground.

"That is a gun," replied the stranger, "but that is what I use instead of a spear."

"My father hunts with a spear," said the girl, "but it has a sharp point. Your spear has no point; how can it pierce his thick hide?"

"I do not try to pierce his hide with it," laughed the man. "I put a small ball of metal into it, and when I ignite the powder, the explosion hurls out the missile with tremendous force."

"Like a trumbash," cried the girl. "I understand now. My father hurls a trumbash, too, sometimes; but he throws it with his hand. Why don't you throw yours with your hand?"

To explain to the untaught mind of this small maiden of the wilds the intricate mechanism of the modern fire-arm was no simple task. Yet, with the remarkable intrepidity of his race, the white man plunged volubly

into lengthy explanations, and was not a little surprised at the aptitude she showed in comprehending his meaning. When at length he felt satisfied that his instructions had been completed, he was extremely pleased with the result, and declared he had never seen a more attentive pupil.

CHAPTER V.

HER HERO.

"And your home?" cried Ubaba after a long pause. "You have not told me of your country, nor of the people who make these queer weapons."

"My country, princess, is far, far away, beyond the blue hills yonder; across the wide, rolling ocean a thousand times wider than the great river Kubanda. We travel thither in large boats capable of carrying hundreds of people, and though, with their large sails, they go much faster than any boats on your rivers, yet it is months and months ere we can reach its shores."

"How is it, then, that you are here alone, so far from your land? Have you friends in my father's country, or among the savages who dwell beyond, in the great land from which the river flows?"

"That, lady," the stranger answered slowly, "is a long story. However, you are my friend, and I shall tell you all.

"More than a year ago, a party of six of us, all hot-blooded young fellows, landed on the shores of your beautiful continent, and started to explore the vast regions which lay within. Accompanied by a number of guides and bearers whom we employed in the land that borders on the sea, we made our way in boats or on foot up the river for weeks and weeks, learning strange things about your wonderful country, and collecting rare and curious objects.

"Two of our companions died on the way, but still the rest of the party pressed onwards, for, daily, new wonders of creation were disclosed to our eyes.

"At length, when we had reached the country of the

Monbuttoo, some six hundred miles farther up the river, we rested one night not far from the village of a native chief. As was our custom, two of the guides remained on watch while we slept. Some time before daylight I was awakened by a strange commotion, and, sitting up, I found that we were surrounded by a ghastly group of Monbuttoo warriors. Not one of our natives was anywhere to be seen, and whether they had made their escape, or had betrayed us to the savages, I never was able to discover. However, there we were; four defenceless Englishmen in the power of a hundred merciless cannibals. Our weapons had been taken from us while we slept, and as we could not speak in their tongue, there was, indeed, little hope left for us. One of our party struck down a huge savage with a blow on the cheek. In an instant a dozen spears were in his breast. Poor George! It was the last I ever saw of him, but I can guess the rest."

"I, too," sighed the girl, a tear glistening in her eye, "for I have often heard my father speak of the Monbuttoo, and of their horrible habits."

"The rest of us," continued the traveller, "were bound and separated, and I have yet to learn what became of my two companions. As for me, I became the property of a swarthy giant, who led me to his village, and kept me imprisoned. I knew my impending fate, and could not understand why it was delayed; but I was afterwards convinced that I was being fattened and kept for some great feast-day.

"Besides myself, the chief had one other prisoner,—a Zandey,—and from him I learnt the little of your language I now speak. I have no means of knowing just how long I remained in this captivity, but it must have been several months, and during that time your countryman and I became fast friends.

"As the day of the great feast approached, my fellow-prisoner and I tried to devise plans for our escape, but

none seemed feasible. On the morning when we were taken out to be slaughtered, however, a desperate plan entered my head, and I made up my mind to put it into execution. The outcome could be nothing but death, and that, whatever I did, was staring me in the face.

"My companion and I were led out together, securely bound. About a dozen men of the village were already congregated to perform the ceremony upon our bodies, and others were fast arriving. I turned to my gaoler.

" 'Great chieftain,' I said in the Zandey dialect, 'before I die, let me, I pray, explain to you the secret of the iron rod you took from me. Thus will you have power over your enemies, and no other chief will be great like you.'

"He conferred with his companions for a moment, then replied,—

" 'Should you try to deceive me, your death shall be slow and painful. There are enough here to execute my orders.'

" 'Nay, great chief,' I answered, 'my life is in your power. But I claim one boon,—that should I deal fairly with you, my death be sure and swift. What hope of escape have I?'

"He nodded, and ordered one of his attendants to bring my gun.

" 'My wallet, too,' I cried. 'Part of the secret is in the bag.'

"In a little while the man returned, bearing both. The gun had been unloaded, but in the bag were an ample store of ammunition, three small pocket-guns, each with two chambers, a long hunting-knife, and some other articles. For some queer reason this package had not been disturbed, probably because they did not know how to use its contents.

"While waiting for the bearer's return, I had fidgeted around till my back rested against the wall of a hut.

My hands had been untied, as I explained that I could not show how to use my weapon otherwise.

"When the gun was handed to me, I loaded it for the chief and his party to see, carefully explaining everything so that they should be able to do it for themselves; and, indeed, it was one of the most attentive crowds I have ever seen.

"'Now,' said I to the chief when both barrels had been loaded, 'if you will look down into that end, you will see what happens when I pull the trigger here.'

"He raised the muzzle to his eye, and as he peered down into the barrel, the ball went whizzing through his brain. Before he had time to fall, I had fired the other barrel at another husky giant who stood beside him. In another second my pistols had barked six times, and six other warriors had fallen. With one deft cut of my knife, I severed the thongs that held my companion, and, together, we sped from the spot.

"Stunned by the great noise of the gun, or, perhaps, ignorant of the tragedy that had so suddenly been enacted, not a man stirred to stay our move. Not till we darted off did they seem to realize what had occurred. Then a hue and cry was raised, and the crowd rushed after us. But we had a good start, and we needed no urging to convince us that our utmost speed was necessary.

"We reached the river a hundred paces ahead of the nearest pursuer. Luckily, a boat was standing in the water. We sprang into it together, and, each seizing an oar, we rowed for dear life.

"The Monbuttoo gave chase, but we soon out-distanced them, and though they hung to our trail for the greater part of the day, we at length lost sight of them. All that night, however, and part of the next day, we never slackened speed; but at last, when we felt sure that our pursuers had given up the chase, we made a short halt, and got a small store of provisions.

"The following day we reached the Niam-niam country, and my companion left me. He would have me stay in his village for a while, but I feared news of the presence of a white man in the neighborhood might reach my enemies, and again lead them to take up my trail. So for two days I kept on alone, then as my provisions gave out, I drew up my boat into a little creek and came ashore hunting; and here you have found me."

Ubaba's eyes were sparkling.

"You dear, brave warrior," she cried. "I have already claimed you as my friend, and now I am proud of you. I have always detested the dastardly Monbuttoo, but, cruel, heartless cannibals, I hate them more for what they have done to you. And what shall you do next?"

"That, my lady, I hardly know," the man replied. "For a day or two, I shall not be able to row my boat; yet I doubt not I shall be safe in these woods."

"I know not," said the maiden, speaking rather to herself, "what welcome would await you at my father's house, and before I risk your safety, I must learn my mother's opinion of white men. Ours is a strange country," she added with a sigh. "It may be hard for you to understand the emotions of our people, yet, should danger threaten you among us, I am afraid I could not intercept it nor protect you."

"I assure you, lady," said the man, "my safety is not worth your anxiety. In this forest I shall remain unharmed until my wounds are sufficiently healed to permit me to proceed on my journey. Pray forget the adventurer you have met."

"Nay, of that let me judge," answered the maid. "But stay; beyond the cliff yonder, there is a narrow cave in the rock. Often have I sat there alone, and no one visits it save only my maid, Piriba, and myself. There you shall remain in hiding, until I bring you word again. Can I help you to walk, so far?"

The man struggled painfully to his feet, while Ubaba helped him up, and tenderly supported his wounded arm. For, strangely, while her moral code prohibited a man from touching her, it seemed to permit her freely to touch and minister to the wants of the sick.

After a slow and painful scramble through the thick woods, the pair at length reached the cave, a small crevice in a huge rock, and the man wearily threw himself on a couch of soft moss. Ubaba darted away, and in a couple of minutes returned with an armful of fruits and nuts.

"Eat these now," she said, "for you are hungry. Later you will have something more sustaining."

The stranger caught eagerly at the treat, and soon devoured it. Then his nurse interposed once more. She applied a fresh supply of herbs to the wounds, and bandaged them more carefully. It was the first opportunity the man had obtained of seeing the extent of his hurt, and his heart fell within him. But it gave him a higher opinion both of his nurse and of her remedies; for the pain was totally out of proportion to the appearance of his injuries.

Ubaba readjusted his couch, adding fresh grass and boughs to make it more comfortable. Next she placed a few large branches in front of the cave, so as completely to conceal the entrance. Then at last she returned to the invalid.

"Now you must sleep and rest," she said. "Anon I shall return, and shall bring you food and comforts,—the best the daughter of Ntikkigama can offer to a wounded warrior. *Mina patiro.*" *

"*Mina patiro,*" the man replied. "Pray accept my heartiest gratitude for your many kindnesses."

Five minutes later, Ubaba, with a light step and a lighter heart, was bounding along the path that led to

* *Mina patiro,*—farewell.

her home. For within her breast had been born that day a new sensation and a new light,—the feeling which grows into that instinctive womanly satisfaction at sacrificing all they possess for the well-being of those whom they adore.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FABULOUS WHITE MAN.

Reaching her home, Ubaba lost no time in finding her mother. That distinguished lady was seated in one of the smaller rooms of the palace, and in her hand was a large wooden bowl of exquisite workmanship, carved in a most intricate manner, upon which she was placing the finishing touches.

Alali looked up as her daughter entered, and repaid her genial smile with an effusive welcome.

"Mother," Ubaba blurted almost breathlessly, "are there any white men?"

Alali was not surprised by the sudden question. Within the last few weeks her daughter had plied her continually with some of the queerest and most unconnected enquiries, and she had always striven faithfully to satisfy this insatiable greed for strange information.

"The father of my grandfather," the mother replied slowly after a long pause, "was a prince among the Ibani people in that great country beyond which the sun sets, and where the waters of the mighty seas dash themselves upon its shores. In that country, I have been told, white men have been seen. Thither they come, from some distant land, in massive boats, with wings like eagles', that flit about from place to place. But where they come from, no one knows; and, as they are wild and ferocious, people have always avoided them, and they have kept their own counsel."

"Are they like the savages who dwell beyond us in the land beneath the rising sun,* my mother?" asked Ubaba.

* The Monbuttoo,—on their eastern border.

"Somewhat like," assented the mother, "though, if the reports of them that have reached me are true, they are even wilder savages, and more bloodthirsty. When they come to the land of my fathers, they steal away men, women, and children, and, placing them in their boats, fly away to some wild and distant country, where they feast upon them."

"Are they cannibals, my mother?" Ubaba asked with wide-open eyes.

"Indeed they are, my child, and far more detestable than the accursed Monbuttoo, for while the latter feast only upon the victims of their raids, the white men make no exceptions."

"What do they look like?" asked the maid; for she felt certain that the white man she had seen, with his honest blue eyes and his countenance open as the sky, could not be of this variety.

"Indeed, my child, I have not seen them, and tell you only in the words of those who have seen this accursed people and lived; and they are few. It is said that they have the beak and claws of the night hawk, and feet with a hoof like a goat's. Their face and hands are white, but the rest of their body is covered with a loose, flappy skin of various colors. Of this skin they divest themselves at nights, also of their hoofs; and in this state they are able to fly about, and to enter houses through the smallest cracks. Then they rob away the babes from their mothers' breasts, and take them away to their ships; and no one dare interfere to stop them. When they clap their hands, it makes a noise like thunder; and smoke and flame burst forth, and destroy those at whom they have been directed. Indeed, the tales that have been told of these people are well-nigh incredible."

"Would you have a white man come to our village, my mother?" the girl asked guilelessly.

"May the Great Light protect us from such a calam-

ity!'' gasped the mother in real alarm. ''But have no fear, my child. The arms of your father are strong, and the warriors of our people are valiant. Ere the white monsters may drink the life-blood of our beloved, their hoof must leave its imprint on the bosom of Ntikkigama, aye, and crunch, too, the forehead of Alali. Have no fear, child. At least, they visit not these parts.''

Such, indeed, was the description of the white man, as furnished by Alali. But could any English mother of that day give to her child a more accurate description of the natives of Central Africa? Indeed, up to the present day, nearly two centuries later, neither race seems fully to know the other, while their conjoint progeny,—an unnatural hybridization,—portrays too faintly for complete analysis the characteristics of either.

Ubaba hung her head and slunk from her mother's room. How had her dreams and hopes been dissipated! This man, who had won her pity and her esteem, was no better, after all, than the despised Monbuttoo.

Yet, could she believe it of him? Her heart, her true womanly instinct, told her that the accusation was unjust. True, her mother's word had heretofore been her only law, and never could she believe her wrong. But Alali had admitted that she had never seen a white man. What she said was only from hear-say, and might she not have been misinformed? Ubaba decided, whatever the consequence, she would not yet give up her mission.

''Piriba,'' she called. ''Hey, Piriba.''

''My lady's hand-maiden,'' answered the girl approaching. ''What does my lady wish?''

Ubaba led the maid out into the field, and sat beneath a large tree, where the approach of any intruder would be readily observed. Piriba sat beside her,—for the distinction between mistress and slave among these people hardly justifies the use of these harsh names. The slave ate from the same dish, drank from the same

bowl, and slept in the same bed with her mistress. They were to each other as sisters, or dear friends; and the only real distinction was that the slave, by a studied form of oral adulation, strove to enhance the social importance of the master or mistress.

"Piriba," said the princess, "I have ever trusted you."

"The speech of my tongue," Piriba answered, "the sight of my eyes, or the speed of my legs, move only as my lady shall direct. The daughter of Orumbo has never failed in the service of the Lady of Kubanda."

"I know it, maid," Ubaba replied, "yet this is a very serious matter. Can you be faithful to the death, Piriba?"

"My lady is unkind to doubt," answered Piriba simply.

"I doubt you not, Piriba. I trust you fully. I must have your help, and, chiefly, your advice; for I have rejected those of my mother."

Piriba gazed in open-eyed astonishment, for anything like the young princess' disobeying her mother was absolutely unthinkable.

"Mistake me not, Piriba," Ubaba hastened to explain. "I have not consulted my mother on this phase of the question, because I fear her opinion would differ from mine. But you will judge, and counsel me."

"The gentle heart of my lady cannot think wrong," answered the slave-girl, her fear allayed by the princess' explanation.

"In the woods near the river," said Ubaba, "there lies a wounded warrior who is in sore need of help. Can we succor him, Piriba?"

"Is that all, my lady?" cried Piriba, relieved. "The mbanga of Ntikkigama has never been closed to the brave nor the unfortunate. My lady has but to speak, and the wounded man shall be brought hither and tended

as if he were my mother's brother, though he had slain my father.''

''Nay, Piriba,'' the princess answered, ''we must tend him where he is, and keep him there without letting anyone know aught of it. I fear he would not be welcome in the mbanga of my father.''

''The noble Alali to close the door against a wounded warrior though he were a thousand times a foe!'' gasped Piriba. ''Surely the Lady Ubaba talks in her sleep.''

Ubaba did not speak for a full minute. Then, suddenly, she asked, ''Piriba, have you ever seen a white man?''

''Nay, my lady,'' answered Piriba smiling, ''there are no white men, save only in the tales our mothers told to scare us when we were naughty children.''

''What did your mother tell you about the white men?'' Ubaba asked.

''That they are ferocious beasts, with a bird's beak and the hoofs of a goat,'' answered Piriba. ''That at nights they remove their skin, and fly from house to house, devouring little children.''

Again Ubaba was silent for a long while. Then she spoke once more,—so softly that the other could barely hear her words.

''Piriba, this wounded warrior is a white man.''

Piriba sprang from her seat startled; then, looking full at her mistress for a moment, she replied defiantly,

''There are no white men, my lady.''

''Piriba, this wounded warrior is a white man,'' reiterated Ubaba so softly that her words were hardly audible. ''He has neither the bird's beak nor the goat's hoof. Indeed, he is in no way unlike other men, except only in his color. Nothing else about him is unnatural, and though his dress is much different from ours, I do not think it unbecoming. You will see him for yourself, provided you will help me to tend him.''

Piriba scanned her mistress' countenance to make sure that she was in earnest. Then she answered,

"The task is over-dangerous, my lady. Why not send a dozen of your father's warriors to deal with him?"

"Where the foot of Ntikkigama falls," said Ubaba slowly, "be it in battle or in the chase, the foot of the brave Orumbo is ever the first to fall behind. Does the daughter of Orumbo hesitate to follow where the daughter of Ntikkigama leads on an honorable mission?"

"I fear but for your safety, my lady," cried the trembling Piriba. "How could I return to tell the noble Alali that ill had befallen the child of her bosom?"

"Ill?" cried Ubaba. "And where would you be, maiden, to see ill betake the daughter of your chieftain? Dared either of us live and see ill betake the other, or would the father of either return to Bakinji alive with tale of his companion's death? Piriba, I thought otherwise of you."

"But, my lady," cried the maiden,——

"It is enough," answered Ubaba. "Had I known you a coward, I had not spoken to you about it. A coward is never to be trusted. I shall go alone, and the great Gumbah will protect my steps, even as he hath this day done."

Piriba covered her face with her open hands, and great sobs shook her entire frame; for among the Zandey no epithet was more opprobrious than *coward*. Ubaba bent towards her maid, and placed an arm around her neck.

"Forgive me, darling," she coaxed. "I have been unkind,—oh, so unkind. This meanness is as foreign to my nature as cowardice is to yours. Kiss me, Piriba, and say that you forgive me."

Their lips met, and the next moment the incident was completely forgotten in their preparations to visit the wounded warrior.

Here and there the two maidens hastily gathered one

dainty and another for their prospective patient. Soon Piriba had a large basket packed with every available article that their charge could require; and, although when Ubaba's back was turned, she slipped a long knife beneath her mantle, she showed not the slightest external sign of the terror she felt over the coming adventure. Then, each bearing a basket of supplies, they quietly left the house, and plunged eagerly through the forest in the direction of the hidden cavern.

CHAPTER VII.

TIES THAT BIND.

Quietly parting the screen of branches that hid the opening to the cave, Ubaba peered cautiously within, then motioned to her companion. The latter, trembling with both fear and curiosity, placed a quivering hand on the handle of her knife,—still covered beneath her mantle,—before she reached the improvised doorway, but something in the pale, worn face at which she gazed, disarmed her of her antagonism, and almost before she knew it, the wounded stranger had completely won the sympathy of Piriba. Ubaba, quick to read her maid's expressions, saw at once the change of emotions, and, smiling with a kind of I-told-you-so approval, stepped boldly into the apartment. Piriba did not hesitate to follow her.

The white man opened his eyes, and as they met those of Ubaba, a smile lit up his countenance, and removed what little of opposition the slave-girl still retained.

"Have you returned already, my princess?" he asked.

"I trust you have had some sleep, my friend," Ubaba answered, "and feel refreshed. I have brought you some little things that you may need."

"How shall I ever thank you?" the man answered. "Such devotion dwells not else between the opposing shores of your vast continent."

"Nay, malign not people of whom you can know but little," Ubaba replied, though her smile robbed the words of any sting they might seem to convey. "Among our tribes, the door of hospitality has never been closed to the destitute nor the friendless; while, as for the wounded warrior, his very name is a pass-word into the hearts

of our people. But drink this soup, and have some bread. Hunger is worse than wounds.''

She passed him a bowl, not of soup, but of a kind of stew, in which were the legs, breast, and wings of a chicken, and several small pieces of yam. The concoction was not unpalatable, and as the white man, during his stay in Central Africa, had learnt to dispense with salt, he enjoyed the dish to the last morsel. Then she passed him a pitcher of beer, and though he hesitated some time before he would sample the beverage, he at length raised the vessel to his lips and took a long draught.

Not till then did Ubaba trouble him with questions, but when, at last she felt that his wants had been supplied, she sat down on a projecting rock not far away, motioned her maid to another, and set herself to find out what she could about the white races.

''Is that how all the men of your tribe dress?'' she asked pointedly.

''In the same fashion, with slight variations,'' he replied. ''Some of my people spend large fortunes every year for different dresses, and the styles are somewhat varied; but, on the whole, I do not believe you can find much fault with my dress, save only that it is worn and soiled.''

''I do not find any fault with it,'' she replied hastily. ''I rather like it. Is this the skin of the animals of your country?''

''Nay, lady; that material is woven from the hair of a kind of goat, and this, from the fibres of a plant, much after the way you weave your baskets.''

''How pretty,'' she said, inviting the attention of her companion. ''And what are the animals of your country?''

The Englishman gave a list.

''Do you eat the flesh of these animals?'' she asked.

He named some that were eaten.

''But you eat other flesh?'' she persisted.

"Birds and fish," he replied. "I cannot think of any other."

"And children," she reminded innocently.

"Children?" gasped the white man in real horror.

"Yes," she replied. "Don't you eat the flesh of children?"

"Nay, princess, no white men eat human flesh."

"But the white men take away the children, aye, and the men and women, too, from among our neighbors, and from the land of my mother's ancestors, and, in their great boats that fly like eagles, they bear them away to their country, from whence they never return. There they feast upon them."

"Nay, my princess, you have been deceived," the white man answered. "Some cruel men of our race do, indeed, bear away the people of your land, but not to kill them. They make servants of them to work in their fields and in their houses, but they give them dresses such as the white men wear, and food such as the white men eat, and comforts such as the white men enjoy." For even then he would not unravel to her innocent eyes the barbarities of negro slavery.

"I am so glad," she said relieved, "for when I saw you, I could not believe this horror concerning you. Yet so it has ever been related to us."

The questions with which Ubaba, and at rare intervals, Piriba, too, plied the traveller, and the answers he gave, though highly interesting to the two African maidens, would be common-place to the modern reader. When the approach of night forced them to depart they had a good store of information regarding the white man and his country, and though much of this was beyond their comprehension, they understood enough to keep them in eager conversation till they reached their home.

Early next morning, Ubaba and her companion again made their way to the wounded man, taking him fresh supplies, and giving him the closest attendance. Day

after day this course was pursued, long hours were spent in conversation, and the girls learnt new wonders about the distant country where the white men lived, till they wished they could see some of these mysteries for themselves.

Ubaba had asked the man to teach her the tongue of his country, for she was very fond of learning new languages; and so talented was she in this department, that in less than a week she could hold conversation with him in halting English. So pleased was her instructor at this success, that, partly to while away his time, he offered to teach her to read; and though he had much difficulty in explaining the process to her comprehension, when once she got hold of the idea, she made such extraordinary progress that within an incredibly short time she could read easy sentences which her teacher wrote for her.

This extra activity so filled up the white man's time that when he felt strong enough to resume his journey, he was astonished at his quick recovery, as well as loth to leave those who had, with their black faces and queer dresses and customs, nevertheless, endeared themselves to his heart.

On the day preceding his departure, Ubaba summoned one of her most trusted slaves.

"Renjy," she said, "you have ever been faithful and discreet. I have a mission for you, which, so you shall serve me well, will endear you forever to the heart of your mistress."

"It shall be untold honor to serve you, lady," Renjy answered. "What is your will?"

"I have a friend," said the princess, "who must reach the great sea safely and secretly. It concerns my honor that no harm befall him. In the ginger grove by the small creek, a boat lies hidden. Thither take such provisions as will serve for the whole journey; Piriba shall assist you. On the morrow the stranger departs, and

you shall accompany him; yet no one must know of your destination. To the great sea must you guide and protect him, and to what safety he shall elect; then you shall be free to return as you will. You are brave and loyal: the honor of Kubanda rests upon you."

"I shall not fail you, my lady," Renjy replied with a low bow. "I have no allegiance save only to my lord and to my princess. I shall serve you faithfully."

"Do so," said Ubaba, "and a fitting reward shall await your return. Yet, one word of caution. This stranger is one whom you might at first account an enemy. Notwithstanding whatever else you have been told, I promise on the word of a Zandey and a princess, that he is a brave warrior, a true man, and a faithful friend to me and to my people. Serve him truly without fear, and Ubaba shall not forget."

"I shall do your will without reserve, my lady. My father fell in the service of my lord your father, and for the honor of Kubanda. I have naught to fear."

"It is for this reason that I have selected you," said Ubaba, "and because you have no kindred to whom you must explain your journey;—for it is a long and dangerous one. Yet return when you will, and bring me word of your safe voyage. Farewell, Renjy. You have the confidence of Ubaba. May Gumbah protect you!"

Next day Ubaba reached the cave earlier than usual, accompanied by Piriba; for never once since she had undertaken this new charge did she visit his residence without the escort of her maid.

In the dark shadow upon her dusky brow, no less than in the vacuous shiftlessness of her hitherto sparkling eyes, the white man could read the sorrow that his leave-taking meant to her; and, truth to tell, though his path once more led towards civilization, the Englishman did not feel anxious to tear himself away from her.

"To your people you will go," said the girl, "and because of your treatment among the savages who dwell

at the head of the river, you will tell tales of the cruelty of the natives of Africa.''

''Wrong me not, my princess,'' he replied. ''Whatever treatment the great African wilds shall mete out to me, the first thought that the name of Africa will ever recall must be of the kindness I have received at your hands.''

''I thank you,'' said the maiden. ''You have taught me to love and trust the white men; and if they be like you, or like your description of them, I shall welcome them among my people. Unfortunately, the impression of them among us is not such that their presence in our country at this time would be hailed with joy. But when it comes to my time, I shall do much to change the popular opinion.

''Some day, when the worthy Ntikkigama shall be no more,—may the Great Light preserve him!—then his responsibilities will fall upon his daughter, and I shall be Queen of Kubanda, for I am his only child. To walk in the footsteps of my noble father, to be the first in hunt or war, will not be the lot of his unfortunate successor. But if I cannot emulate him in these respects, may I not excel him in others? To open up my country to the white adventurers, so that they may teach our people all those wonderful arts of which you have told me;—would not that be noble of the Queen of Kubanda, and would not posterity bless my memory? I want you to return, I want your countrymen to come with you, when I am ruler of my country.''

''I assure you, lady, no wish will be dearer to the hearts of my countrymen than to visit the land I shall paint to them,'' the Englishman replied. ''I promise you I shall return to lovely Kubanda; and my countrymen will flock to join me. But will you not, princess, deign to visit our lovely England; to see its people, and learn their customs? Then more assuredly would you

be able to put into effect those reforms of which you speak. Indeed, I should guarantee your safe return.''

''It must not be thought of,'' the princess replied, though a touch of longing hung upon her words. ''I wish I could, but it is impossible. Without my mother's knowledge have I daily communicated with you, but to tear myself from her bosom would be death and shame. Nay, nay; I shall not argue the question. Yet judge not of the daughter of Ntikkigama by what you have seen.''

''I understand, princess; and I honor your decision. But we shall meet again. The word of the Englishman is inviolate as your own. Meanwhile, as a slight reminder, and as a token of the deepest gratitude, will the princess of Kubanda accept a small keepsake from her devoted servant?''

The souvenir was an English shilling. At one edge, the Englishman had, with remarkable patience, drilled a small hole, and through this a piece of twine had been fastened. On one side of the coin he had also deeply cut his initials,—A. H. P.—for he knew that in Kubanda the coin had no chance of being used as currency.''

''With all my heart I thank you for the gift, kind friend,'' she replied, her eyes sparkling with joy; for all her race was particularly fond of any form of ornaments, and silver was unknown. ''I shall be proud to accept it, and to wear it on my bosom in remembrance of my dear friend and teacher. I hold sacred the promise of your return, and my heart shall long for you. And now, good-bye. The day waxes, and you must go. At the creek you will find your boat provisioned, and a rower there to guide and assist you;—Renjy, a faithful kinsman of mine. Unto the coast will he serve you, then he shall be free to do what he wills. Have I your promise?''

''I promise, my princess, and again I thank you,'' the man replied. ''And now, farewell. May the princess of Kubanda ever be happy!''

He held out his hand to her.

The princess looked steadily into his eyes for a second, then smiled.

"The white man he no remember," she said in her best English, "Kubanda, the lady, she no wed, no touch no man the hand; no, no, no."

"Forgive me, my princess," he replied, also in his native tongue, "but for once my emotion carried me away. When I return to Kubanda, I shall have all your customs carefully rehearsed. Farewell."

"Good-bye," she smiled. "Come back again,—all the white men too. Kubanda welcome all when Ubaba is her queen. Good-bye. May the Great Gumbah protect your path!"

A large tear fell on her hand as she left the cave, but she turned to her maid with a smile.

"I shall miss him, Piriba," she said; "he taught me so much."

"But he will return," replied the other, "when the princess of Kubanda shall assume the place of the noble Ntikkigama,—may Gumbah preserve him! And the noble Ubaba will make him chief of Kubanda on the throne beside her, and he shall be her lord."

Ubaba was silent for a minute. Then she answered, as if in deep thought,

"It may be, Piriba; it may be. He is brave and true; a warrior like unto my honored father. I may grant him honor when he return; I cannot tell."

Then the two girls walked slowly to the mbanga of Ntikkigama, and not another word was spoken. For the future Queen of Kubanda had lost her heart,—and to one so far beneath her that she dared not admit it even to her devoted slave.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUIT OF WANDANGO.

Three uneventful years skipped by. Renjy had not returned, and no word had come of the fate of the white adventurer. Piriba had, on several occasions, referred to him, but the pained and flushed confusion which her mistress evinced, soon led her to greater caution and more restraint; and lately she had avoided the subject entirely. But she watched with grave concern the devotion, almost to idolatry, of the young princess for a carved shilling attached to a string, which she wore around her neck, and a tiny package of papers with markings on them, over which she would often pore for hours at a time, then gaze towards the sinking sun with a dreamy, hungry look in her eyes.

The princess, though considerably grown, was not strikingly different from what she had been three years earlier. But as she had already reached, and, in some opinion, was passing, that age at which girls of her tribe married; and as Ubaba, besides being in her own rights a princess in direct succession to the chieftaincy of her father, was considered a maiden of surpassing beauty, and of superior wit and intelligence among the belles of Bakinji, it is not surprising that frequent appeals to her father for her hand in marriage had been made.

In the majority of cases, such an appeal was all that would be necessary to the betrothal and marriage of a Kubanda girl; but both Alali and her daughter contended, and Ntikkigama did not demur, that since every indication pointed to the probability of the maiden's becoming the next ruler of her country, she ought to have her own free choice in the selection of a mate who, she

felt, could nobly share with her the responsibilities of her position. And so it was that suitor after suitor had been rejected; for, like other maidens of her age, Ubaba had an ideal of her own, and this ideal had not yet appeared on the scene.

It was not strange, therefore, that one morning there should appear at the hut of Ntikkigama, a royal mission from Wandango, king of the Mabode tribe, on the southern borders of Kubanda. The royal procession was announced by two heralds, one blowing on a horn, while the other performed furiously on a small drum. Behind the heralds walked a portly chieftain, the chamberlain of the court of Wandango, accompanied by half-a-dozen warriors. Following these were as many slaves, who bore presents and supplies.

Ntikkigama, apprised by his scouts of a friendly visit, sent out his heralds and a dozen men-at-arms to meet the company, and escort them to the royal presence. The party was entertained in an outer court, while the host donned his royal robes for the princely meeting.

When at last this preparation had been completed, a courtier gave the signal, the musicians struck up a lively air, consisting more of noise than of music, and the visitors were led into the great reception hall of the palace.

Nearly seven feet tall, with proportionately broad shoulders and great sinewy arms and hands, his beard oiled and brushed, his head erect, its long black hair, in multitudinous braids each no thicker than the tail of a field-mouse, surmounted by a rimless hat of the richest serval-skin on which gleamed one large glass bead above a row of small iron balls, Ntikkigama, clothed in a loose-fitting robe of colobus and genet skins interlaced, gazed indefinitely into space with the haughty arrogance of autocratic insolence, from a large chair at the farther end of the room, despite his rude setting, every inch a king and a man. A dozen courtiers sat on either side

of him, while before him a number of stools were placed in semi-circular rows, a slave standing behind each stool.

As the visitors were slowly marshalled into the royal presence amid the tumultuous beating of drums and braying of horns, they quietly seated themselves on these stools, without so much as a glance from the king. When at length the procession had ended, however, the visiting chief arose, and, addressing his host with the circumlocution of his race, spoke thus,—

"Wandango, the supreme chief and great king of the Mabode, chief of the Mitanu, the Urabbabi and the Senaga, conqueror of Matanooti and of the country that lies beyond the river, unto the noble Ntikkigama, his friend and neighbor, by the mouth of his servant, Manuba, chamberlain of the royal household of Mabode, and first in peace as in war, sendeth greetings. May the house of Ntikkigama flourish for ever, and may he see the posterity of his children's children. May the spirit of his ancestors never disapprove of his actions, and may his descendants call upon him in prayer!

"Furthermore, unto the great Ntikkigama, doth my lord and master, the worthy Wandango, send presents and gifts; to wit, one bundle of lances,"—a slave approached with a bundle of lances and knelt before the king,—"which, may they never fail in battle or in the chase; secondly, one bundle of skins,"—a second slave brought up his tribute,—"which, though they may add neither to the dignity nor the splendor of the house of Ntikkigama, yet show the noble intentions of my master; thirdly, one pair of elephants' tusks, which, may they ever be a pedestal to the royal throne; and, fourthly, one basket of costly dishes for the noble lady of Ntikkigama, the worthy Alali; and may her heart be kind unto my lord of Mabode.

"And, furthermore, that the land of the Mabode and the land of the Kubandans shall be as one land, and that the chief of the Mabode shall for ever look with favor

upon the chief of the Kubandans, and that his children's children shall bless his name and revere him, and that posterity shall be raised up unto the noble Ntikkigama who shall do sacred reverence unto his memory; my lord the king of the Mabode doth crave the hand of his honored daughter, the worthy Ubaba, to whom also, doth my lord of the Mabode, the magnificent Wandango, send, as a token of his deep devotion, one necklet of iron with heavy iron balls, and may they rest lightly upon the breast of the noble Ubaba."

Here the last slave approached, with a stout iron chain, to which iron balls were attached at regular intervals, a necklace popular among the wealthy ladies of several African tribes, and weighing over twenty pounds!

With the superbly majestic dignity inherent to a race of kings whose first ruling ancestor had been lost in that mythical nebulosity of a newly-formed world, Ntikkigama rose slowly to his feet, and addressed his visitors:

"Ntikkigama of Kubanda, to Wandango of the Mabode, greetings. May the spirit of his ancestors make him wise. And for the presents of Wandango, thanks from all the household of Ntikkigama. May his storehouse ever increase.

"Nevertheless, unto your lord shall you say that the house of Kubanda has never accepted a price for its daughters, and, though feeling honored, cannot accept his presents. And of the Princess Ubaba, you shall return unto your lord and say that the princess will choose for herself a lord who shall delight her, and her father will not coerce her heart."

"In that case," replied the ambassador, "pray introduce me to the princess, that I may inform her of the devotion of my master, and take him an answer from her own lips."

"It is but fair," answered the king; then, to a courtier, he added, "Summon the Lady of Kubanda."

Indeed, as was customary, Alali and her daughter

were in an adjoining room, within earshot of the entire proceedings, and were ready to appear. In a minute, therefore, the two stood in the midst of the assembly.

Ubaba, slight and erect as one of her own palm-trees, clothed in a single skin of milky whiteness that draped her entire figure, a wreath of wild convolvulus around her head, walked slowly, majestically to the foot of her father's throne, and, bowing her entire body in a graceful courtesy, said in a clear, ringing voice,

"You sent for me, my father."

"The noble Wandango," replied her father, "king and supreme chief of the Mabode, by the word of his servant Manuba, sends you greetings and presents. The worthy Wandango, further, solicits in marriage the hand of the honored princess of Kubanda."

"May the noble Wandango prosper," said the maiden, turning to the envoys, and speaking in slow, sweet tones; "and you, his servants, may you ever be valiant and true. In the palace of Ntikkigama this night you shall rest upon new mats of finest popukky, and all you desire shall be given unto you. On the morrow you shall return unto your master, and our warriors will guard you to the borders of our kingdom. And this shall be your answer to your lord,—and you will deliver it unto him even as it is sent, in all humility of spirit and gratefulness of heart, not ignorant of the high honor the noble Wandango has conferred upon my poor maidenhood by the flattering offer. Yet, unto your master shall you say that the daughter of Ntikkigama, unworthy though she feels herself, may not accept the honor the noble chieftain of the Mabode desires to confer upon her. Nevertheless, the princess of Kubanda desires to retain the good friendship of the powerful Wandango, which she hopes she has not forfeited by her necessary refusal; and may posterity bless his name."

"The Lady of Kubanda," said Manuba, rising, "has

not given her reason for declining the offer of the noble Wandango.''

''Nay,'' replied Ubaba, ''surely a maid may decline an offer of marriage without burdening her suitor with reasons, which must be as unpalatable as they are unnecessary.''

''Then perhaps the princess, on maturer thought, may reconsider her refusal,'' Manuba persisted. ''The king of the Mabode is rich and powerful.''

''I know it,'' Ubaba answered; ''yet the decision of the daughter of Ntikkigama is irrevocable.''

''Then, honored lady,'' said Manuba, ''it may only be meet for me to say that Wandango will not soon forget this insult.''

''Insult, forsooth!'' Ubaba laughed. ''Must a maiden wed every suitor who approaches her? What then if she be betrothed to one; must she break it for another?''

''For an offer from the king of the Mabode, she should, indeed, madam; for Wandango is by far the most powerful chief in the land, and that which he does not receive upon request, he will assuredly take by force.''

''By force?'' answered Ubaba with a smile. ''But, indeed, noble Manuba, your language surpasses the authority of a messenger. Yet you have my answer to your lord. With that return, and with greetings to him from the daughter of Ntikkigama.''

Ubaba glided from the chamber, the king arose, and, amidst a thunder of acclamations, was ushered from the apartment, and the entire audience separated.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHIVALRY OF KUBANDA.

Ubaba accompanied her mother to her room, and, with a sigh of relief, sat on a stool beside that reserved for the elder lady. Alali bent over to kiss the brow of the maid, and could not help observing the cloud of worry that overhung the girl's shiftless eyes.

"You were right, my child," the mother said soothingly, "and spoke like a daughter of the house of Kubanda. 'Twere worse than death to your mother and your people, to behold the daughter of Ntikkigama no better than a cast-off mistress in the crowded harem of that moth-eaten old profligate of the Mabode. You answered wisely, my daughter."

"It was the only answer I could give, my mother," replied Ubaba, "yet I fear that I have incurred upon the head of my unhappy father the unfailing enmity of our powerful neighbor."

"Nay, my child," the mother answered, "your father is not unhappy. Even you, my love, can never know how all our happiness is wrapped up in you. Of Wandango's enmity we may, indeed, be assured; yet when has the valiant Ntikkigama been unhappy to lead his brave warriors against any foe?"

"It is even so, my mother," sighed the princess, "yet how must I feel to know that brave men must suffer and die to protect a helpless maiden? Oh, Great Creator, why didst thou ordain for us women that ever we must bring sorrow upon those who love us?"

"Nay, maiden," said Alali, "brave men are brave *because* they suffer happily to protect the helpless and the pure. Believe me, child, no man who hurls a trumbash

to protect the princess of Kubanda from dishonor, shall balk at death, or sorrow at eternity. True nobility of purpose is its own highest reward."

"Your words are cheering, my mother," answered Ubaba, "and I glory in the valor of my father, and the honor of my countrymen. Oh, that I, too, could bare my bosom to the hungry javelin of the unbearable Mabode! Then would the detestable Wandango see that the daughter of Ntikkigama would bravely welcome death rather than his licentious embrace; then would the warriors of Kubanda know that they fight not to defend the honor of a coward!"

"Nay, child," replied the mother, "no new incentive is necessary to the valor of your countrymen. As for your bravery, who can doubt it? But women must show their courage in other ways, and fight their own sorrowing hearts while their dearest ones face death in their protection. That the daughter of your father would not shrink from death in defence of her honor, none believes more firmly than your devoted mother. May Gumbah protect you!"

"I thank you for your kind and noble words my mother," said the girl, "and you shall see that you have not misjudged the daughter of your bosom. But I must seek my father, and give him words of devotion in this his hour of suspense."

"No suspense marks your father's course, Ubaba. Ever forward in the fray, he well knows the temper of the bloodthirsty Mabode, and will not be taken unprepared. But go. Your words may yet cheer him to greater valor."

It was even as Alali had said. In the armory of the palace, Ubaba came upon the warrior, busily overlooking his weapons. He turned as his daughter entered, and kissed her tenderly between the eyes.

"You are a dear, brave girl," he said, "and have made your father proud of you. The arm of Ntikkigama shall

avenge the insult this day offered to the princess of Kubanda.''

''You think, then, that the Mabode will attack us, my father,'' said Ubaba.

''Early on the morrow,'' the chief answered. ''Ere the ambassadors reached my court, I had word from my scouts that a great band of Mabode warriors, a thousand strong, was massed upon our southern borders. The wily Wandango, dishonorable in war as in love, foresaw your refusal of his infamous proposal, and had prepared to strike at once. Indeed, I believe the offer was only intended to provoke a quarrel; for the toothless old chieftain of the Mabode, a contemporary of my father's, well knew that no Kubanda virgin would ever accept his embraces.

''No sooner was the reception ended, than one of the slaves of the mission departed without attracting any attention. Manuba and his companions are enjoying our hospitality without apparent knowledge of the absence of this slave. Yet I have discovered that he is no slave, but is even Lasango, a great captain of the Mabode, who has been entrusted by Wandango to provoke the quarrel, and then lead his army to sack Bakinji. Early to-morrow the ambassadors will leave peacefully, and, without our borders, will meet Lasango and his army, and give them an account of our strength and preparedness. Then the band will attack us.''

''And will you let the spies go, my father?'' gasped Ubaba, aghast at the Mabode scheme.

''It were dishonorable to imprison peaceful messengers,'' replied Ntikkigama, ''and such, only, our visitors would claim they are. Yet little of information shall they take to the enemy.''

''Are our men prepared to meet them?'' the maid enquired.

''Eight hundred armed men of Kubanda will this night sleep with their spears beside them,'' the king an-

swered. "The valiant Orumbo will see to that, though our visitors must know nothing of it. To our out-lying territories have we hurried messengers, and a thousand men of our people will be here in a couple of days, should a second Mabode army follow the first; but of Lasango's thousand, we can easily dispose unaided."

"Alas, my father," cried Ubaba, falling on her knees and embracing the warrior's legs. "Alas that your daughter should bring sorrow upon you, and death upon your people!"

"Nay, maiden," answered the king, lifting the girl in his great, brawny arms, and soothing her like a child, "war, to the men of Kubanda, has never been accounted sorrow; and death in defence of honor has ever been welcome."

"Yet, the men of Mabode are considered mighty warriors, my father," said Ubaba, "and our men can neglect nothing. Several of necessity must fall, and my heart bleeds for the widows and orphans who must, to-morrow, mourn the loss of husband and father. I know that these should not be the words or the thoughts of a maiden whose father is the foremost warrior of her land; —a maiden who may some day,—may the great Gumbah long postpone it,—have to direct the destiny of her people and their martial policy: yet, forgive me, my father; I am not a coward, but, after all, I am only a girl."

The rough, bearded lips of the warrior pressed those of his daughter.

"I do not misjudge you, Ubaba," he replied, "and I take pride in the thought that though Gumbah has not given me a son, yet when I am laid with my fathers, the land of Kubanda shall still have a ruler whom it can love and trust; one for whom her warriors will gladly sacrifice their lives. As for the widows and orphans whose protectors die in defence of honor, they are the proudest memorials Kubanda can raise to the glory of the heroes who have made her what she is. They become

the children of the state, and any warrior is bound to protect them even with his life. Yes, maiden, not for the princess only, but for the meanest virgin in all Bakinji, a thousand brave men are ever ready to shed their life-blood. Well may you be proud of your countrymen.''

''And its maidens,'' cried Ubaba passionately, ''what can we do? Must we ever be helpless creatures, dependent only on the valor of brave men for even the preservation of our personal honor? Must we claim the heart-blood of the noblest heroes of our land, and give nothing in return? Give me, too, a shield and spear, and let me march in the ranks. The Lady of Kubanda shall show that the blood of Ntikkigama flows in her veins.''

''Nay, princess,'' soothed the king, ''that may not be. The warriors of Kubanda would count it dishonor could they not safeguard the sanctity of their women. Indeed, it is the women who give most; for, while we can but give our blood or be acclaimed cowards, ye give all else that we have, and that, freely. Ye give us love, ye give us courage, ye give us honor, ye give us labor, ye give us thought, ye give us counsel, ye give us even life itself. The men of Kubanda account it their only chance of honor to protect their women. You will not rob them of that.''

''Then, my father,'' said Ubaba, ''if I may not draw spear in my own defence, I shall hie on the morrow to the holy temple, and the fragrant savor of sacrifice, with the united chant of the sacred bundu, shall all day rise unto the Almighty in prayer for the victory of our arms, the safety of my father, and the repose of the slain. In this, at least, may I aid the warriors who fight for blessed Kubanda.''

''That you may well do,'' answered the father, ''and in that, you will aid us. The other maidens of the household may accompany you.''

''Nay, my father, none but the sacred bundu may

congregate together. The other women of the household shall prepare dressings for the wounded, and shall apply them. Piriba and my honored mother will direct them."

"You know what is best," Ntikkigama replied. "I thank you for bringing me words of cheer, and am doubly proud of my noble daughter. Now I must advise with Orumbo, for the time presses, and there is much to arrange. Farewell."

"Farewell, my dear father," said Ubaba. "Gumbah, the Almighty, protect you, and his great strength empower your right hand! Your exertions, and the exertions of my people, for the honor of Ubaba shall never be forgotten."

CHAPTER X.

THE WRATH OF THE MABODE.

Early on the following morning the messengers of Wandango, accompanied by a small escort of Kubanda warriors, made their departure from the court of Ntikkigama, and no sign of concern or distrust appeared among their hosts.

No sooner had the Mabode visitors departed, however, than Orumbo marshalled into the courtyard of the palace, a chosen band of Kubanda heroes, eight hundred strong. The men, great swarthy giants, moved *en masse* with regular military precision, exhibiting a discipline and amenability to orders hardly to be expected in the interior of Africa.

Each soldier bore a shield some four feet long and eighteen inches wide, with which, with remarkable dexterity, he was able to cover his entire body. Their weapons were spears, long knives, and trumbashes; the trumbash consisting of five or six sharp iron spikes so joined that the points stuck out in all directions. In the court behind them, great stores of extra weapons were piled, and some rude preparations for the reception and care of the wounded in the day's bloody conflict had even been made by the women of the party.

Ntikkigama passed down the long column of men in a final review; and, as he greeted one veteran here, or reminded another there, of the many conflicts in which they had participated together, his black eyes beamed with pride and satisfaction. And well they might; for nowhere in all Africa,—nowhere in all the world,—could a finer regiment of soldiers be mustered.

Before the review was completed, however, another

figure appeared on the scene. Ubaba, lithe and graceful, in the adornments befitting her position, strode majestically up to her father's side, and asked quietly,

"My father, may I speak?"

Ntikkigama, surprised, but confident of his daughter's ready wit, and not ignorant of her lofty though somewhat strange ideals, nodded assent; and Ubaba, the cynosure of all eyes, reaching the middle of the foremost rank, raised her hand to command silence, and said in a clear, ringing voice,—

"Men of Kubanda, my fathers and my brothers, I greet you. Often have ye gone forth, the light of battle gleaming from your eyes, to chastise your enemies and win glory for yourselves. Never have the war-drums sounded but the warriors of Ntikkigama have been found ready to answer the call. Ye have fought bravely for yourselves, for your country, for your chief; but to-day ye fight for the honor of a helpless maiden.

"Ye have daughters, ye have sisters, ye have wives. Nay, more; there is not a man among you but respects the honor of the stranger who dwells within the borders of your country. When, therefore, ye this day face the accursed Mabode, ye will remember that ye fight to protect the maidens of your land,—your daughters and your sisters. Ye fight, above all, for the honor of Ubaba; and to the victor shall the trophy belong.

"Were there doubt of the result of the conflict,—were there doubt that the chivalry of Kubanda is able to protect its women,—then had the daughter of Ntikkigama, too, taken shield and spear, and be foremost in the field. But I know it is otherwise, and our maidens will be safe.

"In the temple of Gumbah this day will the sacrifice and the prayer of the sacred virgins rise to the Almighty, and the Princess of Kubanda shall lead the choir. Ours is the fight, and the maidens of our land shall aid in the only way in which they are permitted.

"It is enough, my warriors. Ye have ever been

valiant and noble; I know ye cannot be less. However ends the encounter, ye have this day forever won the gratitude of Ubaba, and of the maidens of Kubanda."

A lengthy applause, augmented by trumpets and drums, greeted the speech, and Ubaba disappeared. If her object was rather to give a view of the fiery queen who was some day to succeed to the throne of Ntikkigama, her appearance was a master-stroke. Not what she said, but that she said something, mattered alone to these fiery sons of the wilds.

Before the cheering had entirely ceased, a scout came flying in, with news of the approach of the invaders. Ntikkigama at once dispatched a company of about two hundred men, all picked veterans of countless fights, under Orumbo, on some secret mission.

"Upon you," he said, "will the brunt of the battle fall. Yet ye shall resist stubbornly to the last man. When the fight is hottest, then help is nearest."

After these had disappeared, the chief dismissed his men,—to hold themselves in readiness, however;—for he did not wish the Mabode to see at the outset that they were prepared for the encounter.

In a short while, the great army of invaders had reached the outer guards of the village, and Ntikkigama, accompanied by only two of his men, went out to meet them.

"Why come ye thus against a friendly neighbor," he asked of the leader, who had halted his army upon a slight eminence overlooking the entrance to the town, "and what is your grievance against us?"

"When a prince like my lord of the Mabode," said Lasango, who led the expeditionary force, "craves to exalt your humble daughter, you should fall in the dust at his feet. Who are you that would oppose the will of the mighty?"

"Nay, good friend," Ntikkigama replied, "in our country the wooing of a maid is her own affair. If

among the savages who own the sway of your ruler it be otherwise, then let Wandango seek among them a bride.''

''Enough of your vulgar palaver,'' cried Lasango. ''We came hither to fight, not to talk. Nevertheless, if you will forthwith bring your daughter, with such a dowry as may satisfy a king, the gracious condescension of our master permits us to return without razing and burning your detestable village.''

''Nay, my friend,'' replied Ntikkigama still calmly, ''that is hardly fair. With our village and our villagers your chief has no quarrel, but with my daughter, and, peradventure, with me. If the chief of the Mabode desires the princess of Kubanda, let him meet her single-handed. If his arms be mightier than hers, or of the champion she may select to defend her honor, then he may take her to his abominable den.''

''The king of the Mabode does not mix in the vulgar brawl,'' said Lasango haughtily.

''Forgive me, kind friend,'' said Ntikkigama, smiling. ''For the moment, I forgot that the king of the Mabode, besides being a bully, is also a coward. But among that vast rabble yonder, perchance there may be one valiant man who will raise lance against Ntikkigama, and defend the king of the Mabode against the princess of Kubanda. What of their leader? Will he not fight in honor of his master?''

''Fight enough you shall have,'' replied Lasango, ''and that right hastily; for, unto your accursed mbanga we shall go, and your ill-bred daughter shall follow us to the court of Wandango, though a thousand devils barred the way.''

''It is as I feared,'' sighed Ntikkigama. ''He, too, is a coward who serves a coward. But what else should I expect of one who, in the guise of a slave, would spy into an honest household? A sneak is ever devoid of honor.''

Here Ntikkigama gave a signal, and a wild burst of

martial music rose on the air. At the sound, six hundred armed men came on the run, and ranged themselves beside their chief.

"You shall have what you crave," roared the king, "and if one of your untrained rabble ever returns to the hut of Wandango, he shall bear such a tale as must glut the appetite of the lascivious old gormand for Kubanda maidens."

The rude weapons of savage warfare make the result of such a conflict partly a matter of brute-force and courage, and partly one of numbers. While the advantage in the latter respect lay distinctly in favor of the Mabode, the Kubandans lacked nothing in great personal strength, and in the dogged tenacity with which they stuck to their purpose. Better disciplined, they showed much greater mobility than their enemies; and this greatly neutralized their inferiority of numbers. Wherever the heaviest attacks of the Mabode fell, at that point was the bulk of Ntikkigama's army to oppose them. And when the invaders retired from their first terrific onslaught, the hundred gory bodies left on the field were, by a large majority, Mabode.

For fifteen minutes more the two armies rested a hundred paces apart, while orators from each side tried to outdo the other in oral vituperation. Then once more the grim work of death would intervene.

Ntikkigama called upon his foremost rank to charge the enemy, and two hundred men, with short spears and daggers, started off on the run. Two hundred others followed twenty paces behind. But Lasango had prepared for just this manœuvre. Sixty paces the column advanced, with no motion from the other side, then, whiz! a cloud of arrows darkened the air, and struck quivering in several shields.

The entire company stopped abruptly, for the arrow was a missile wholly unknown to them, and for a moment they were staggered at this strange weapon. Before

their leader could take in the situation, a second volley of arrows was discharged into their ranks. The archers, however, were themselves novices in the use of a weapon they had newly invented, and, what with poor bows and poorer bowmen, the damage done at this close range was incredibly small. Less than a dozen men had been wounded, and not one seriously. Yet the moral effect was distinctly in favor of the Mabode, and while the Kubandans halted, wavered and hesitated, Lasango called upon his spearmen for a second charge.

This, indeed, was the only thing that could save the puzzled Kubandans. The sight of the double column charging down upon them restored their nerves, brought back the conditions of warfare to which they had been accustomed, and made them fighters once more. They met the Mabode charge, fought doggedly, and retired unconquered for their second spell of wordy warfare. Still, of the scores of new bodies that now littered the intervening space, a slight majority were Kubandans.

The everchanging conditions of warfare render an adaptability to new circumstances almost instinctive among savage tribes. Ntikkigama once more prepared his leading column for another charge, and when the order came, more than two hundred warriors, armed only with daggers and shields, again charged the enemies. No reserves followed as formerly. They advanced perhaps seventy paces, when a storm of arrows met them full in the face. Like corn before the mower they fell; not thirty men were left standing.

The survivors looked down at their fallen comrades, looked up at the Mabode again bending their bows, turned, and fled precipitately. This was too good an opportunity for Lasango to lose, and he ordered his spearmen,—a half of his army,—to give chase and scatter the demoralized Kubandans. As he sped on at their head, he did not have time to notice how carefully the bodies of the fallen Kubandans were covered with their

shields,—all but their eyes,—nor did he see that their hands still held their daggers, point uppermost. Even when his men, in their dense formation, stumbled over these prostrate figures and fell beside them, he did not see that they had been stabbed from beneath. When at last he turned and saw that his ranks were thinned by half, he was face to face with the Kubanda spearmen. The fallen Kubandans had regained their feet, and were again attacking the enemy. The archers, it is true, tried to aid their deceived comrades, but their arrows did more harm to the naked backs of their friends than to the protected breasts of their foe.

At this juncture, a sudden attack on the rear of the invaders completely surprised them. Orumbo, with his two hundred spearmen, had been lying in ambush close behind them before the battle began. Now that the signal they awaited had come, they dashed into the unguarded rear, and not only scattered it, but secured all the supplies. Ntikkigama, by a bold stroke, had divided his army of eight hundred men into three sections, one in front, one in the rear, and one in the middle, of an army of a thousand men! Yet, such was the suddenness and skill of this daring coup, the enemy, completely thrown off his guard, had no time to recover. Lasango and his followers were cut down without mercy; the others threw away their arms and fled.

The conflict deteriorated into mere slaughter. The victorious Kubandans pursued the fleeing Mabode with untiring relentlessness, and when, late into the night, they abandoned the chase, it is doubtful if three-score of Wandango's thousand remained alive.

CHAPTER XI.

WITHOUT MERCY.

While the bloody conflict was being waged at the gate of the city, the princess of Kubanda, with others of the sacred virgins and the priestesses of Gumbah fasted in the temple, and offered sacrifices and prayers to aid their countrymen. When at length these devotions were completed, Ubaba left the sacred edifice and hastened homewards, that she might aid in tending the wounded soldiers who had been brought in from the field.

The temple, as has been said, was at the farthest extremity of the village, in a very secluded spot, and the path home was lonely and untenanted. As the princess hurried forward, she looked neither to right nor left, but, with a mind devoted wholly to the day's sad business, chanted absently one of the hymns she had just been offering to her Creator. Suddenly, from out of the thicket beside her, a blow fell upon her head. She sank in a heap to the ground, and knew no more. For, while in normal times any intrusion into these sacred demesnes would have been impossible, the call of all the men to the battle-field, and the drawing of all attention in that direction, gave ample opportunity to trespassers.

When Ubaba opened her eyes, she was lying on the grass in a narrow pathway that led through a dense wood. It was a bright moon-lit night above the trees, but in the deep shade in which she lay, nothing was plainly visible.

Two men were squatting beside her, speaking in the Mabode dialect, and as she turned to catch their words, she attracted their attention.

"Are you awake at last?" asked one, peering into her

face. "Then you will walk, and save us much trouble. 'Twas no easy work lugging you so far."

"Where are you taking me?" asked Ubaba faintly.

"To your husband, wench;—to our lord of the Mabode. You were warned that what Wandango gets not for the asking he takes by force."

"You will not," screamed the girl. "My father will avenge this insult to his daughter upon the entire tribe of the Mabode, unless ye return me at once to my people."

"Nay, maiden," laughed the man, "your father will fight no more."

"What do you mean?" gasped Ubaba. "Surely no ill has betaken my father."

"Fret not yourself, maiden," the man answered, "for all is past. The brave Ntikkigama has fallen in battle with Lasango, the city of Bakinji has been burnt to the ground, and the noble Alali has perished in the flames."

"Oh, Almighty Light, save me!" cried Ubaba, real tears bursting from her heart.

"We have saved you," replied the man, though Ubaba hardly heard his words, "and Wandango will console you."

Ubaba did not reply. She laid her head upon her folded arm, and great sobs shook her entire form. Alone in the world, helpless, bound, the destined slave of a lascivious old debauchee, would not death come to her rescue? Dragged from communion with the sacred bundu, princess of Kubanda,—now queen, alas!—pure and unpolluted hitherto, must she live to be no better than the common *nzanga* * of whom she had heard such horrible tales? Her heart shrank and died within her, yet she uttered no word.

From this stoical inertia, common to fatalistic natures, Ubaba was rudely aroused by her captors.

* *Nzanga,*—prostitutes.

"Come," said one of them, "you shall walk. The day appears, and our journey is not half done."

"Nay, my friend," coaxed Ubaba, though she well knew the nature of the people with whom she dealt, "urge me not away. If the worthy Ntikkigama,—may his memory be preserved!—has indeed been slain, then his daughter is Queen of Kubanda. Let me return unto my stricken people. Let me but go to bury my father, and to do reverence to his name. Come ye with me, and ye shall be my friends. Ye shall be as great chiefs among us, and shall sit in the councils of Ubaba. What preferments ye shall desire, that shall ye receive, and the honor which has been denied you at the court of Wandango, the ruler of Kubanda shall confer upon her friends."

"Nay, maiden," the man replied, "the servants of Wandango play not false to their trust. Nevertheless, we shall treat you kindly, and it may be you will speak well to our master, and bring us favor in his eyes."

They rose, and dragged Ubaba to her feet. Walking on either side of her where the road permitted, and in front and rear through the narrower tracks, they forced her along, though the progress was painfully slow.

The sombre east was assuming the ruddy glow of morning, when half-a-dozen men, foot-sore and weary, bore down upon them from behind. The men seemed to be in the greatest haste, and as they reached the small party and recognized her captors, Ubaba heard one of them say,—

"Dare you dally, friends? They may yet be upon us."

"What has befallen our party?" one of the two asked. "Are ye in flight?"

"The worthy Lasango has been slain by the king of Kubanda himself," replied one of the company. "Our army has been destroyed by the legions of Ntikkigama, which outnumbered and surrounded us; the king and his men have pursued us late into the night, and if there

be another of our party left alive, we have not seen him.''

''Then our mission has been more successful,'' answered the man. ''Behold the prize we take to our lord.''

''Aye,'' replied the fugitive, ''but ye must hurry. The spear of Ntikkigama is sharp, and his legs will not lag when he learns that the princess is gone. We tarry not with you.''

The men sped on, and her captors hurried Ubaba after them. The maid, however, had heard the tale the fleeing warriors brought, and her heart rose out of the dust once more. Her noble father, instead of being slain in battle, had completely routed the enemy, and had given hot pursuit. Would he miss her in time to follow and retake her from the abductors? It was her only hope.

The two men used all their efforts to hurry the maiden along, and more than once struck her rude blows to hasten her steps, but still she moved more slowly. They dragged her roughly by the arms, but she suffered every indignity patiently, for well she knew that her only hope of life lay in delay.

Before long, another group of three men, survivors from the ill-fated expedition of Lasango, also overtook them. These were in even greater hurry than the former, and scarcely halted as they shouted to their two countrymen,—

''He comes! The murderous Ntikkigama comes in hot pursuit. The princess of Kubanda is missing, and her father will demand her even at Wandango's door. Indeed, ye must leave the maiden and flee, if ye would save yourselves.''

''Nay,'' cried one of the men, ''the maiden must come with us, and at the pace we desire. Her dallying shall be of no avail. Hasten, princess; this is no time for girlish whining;'' and he struck her with all his force.

Ubaba fell to the ground, and refused to stir an inch.

The men struck her repeatedly, but still she did not move. Then one of them said,—

"Your father shall never rescue you. Either you will go with us, or we shall slay you, and cast your carcass into yonder thicket for the ravens to devour."

"Nay," cried Ubaba desperately, "I fear you not, nor death. Slay me if ye will, but to the court of Wandango will I not go."

Once more the two men lifted her bodily and started off on the run. Soon, however, the weight they bore and the difficulty of the road made them halt, and lay their burden down. Again they spoke.

"You shall walk with us, or you shall die. We have had enough of your foolery, and shall not be taken on account of you. It is your last chance. Will you come with us to be noble in the house of Wandango, or will you be thrown lifeless into the thicket where you will be meat for the jackals!"

"To the court of Wandango will I not go," answered Ubaba resolutely. "Yet, leave me here and flee. My father will find me, and not pursue you farther; it is for me alone he seeks. But if he does not find his daughter, and that unharmed, then the land of the Mabode will know the wrath of Ntikkigama, for not a man will escape his spear, nor a hut escape his torch, till the honor of Ubaba be avenged. How say you, my friends; is the prize worth the price? Wandango has countless wives, and the Mabode have beauteous maidens. With them let him be satisfied. Ntikkigama has only one daughter. To him she is all, but to your chieftain is she worth his utter destruction and the destruction of his country?"

"Enough," answered one of the men. "We care not for your talk. Let your father do his worst; that will not bring you back to him, for you will be dead. Yet, if you have such faith in the prowess of Ntikkigama, why not proceed with us to Wandango? You said he will

seek you even there. Why fear his power to rescue you?''

''And that he would,'' answered Ubaba, ''but what would he find there? Would he rescue the pure, unsullied maiden who kissed his hand yesternight, or would it be but the dishonored form,—the empty husk that held his daughter? When I cannot look with honor into my father's eye, I shall crave not rescue, but death.''

''Then death you shall have,'' roared the man, as he drew a short dagger from his girdle. ''The Mabode are not easily balked.''

Ubaba did not crave death. She hated it; she feared it, truth to tell, though she had said she didn't. But she feared dishonor more. And as she gazed up at the cruel dagger gleaming down upon her, she shuddered, and a cloud passed over her eyes. But she was brave, and the brave flinch not from death, nor from any other thing that they fear. She never quailed, though now she saw in the cruel eyes of Wandango's assassin that there was no hope. For a single moment her thoughts ran back to that fond father she was never to see again, who would face death without flinching; to that dear mother who had taught her to prefer honor to life; then she looked up at the horrible scowling visage above her waiting for her reply.

''The daughter of Ntikkigama fears not death,'' she lied,—lied bravely, without knowing that she lied; without allowing her enemies to know. ''Strike, coward; strike deep and true.''

She saw the great black arm rise, then closed her eyes, and braced herself for the last passing pang of pain.

It did not come: oh, that it had!

Ere the murderer's arm came down, his companion, long lost in thought, sprang forward and held it up. Then he pointed in the distance before them, where a great body of men crossed their path nearly at right angles. The other gazed questioningly at the crowd for

a moment without seeming to understand; but his companion said,

"The caravan of the Darfoor traders. They pay handsomely for young slaves, especially for girls, and would give us a fortune for her. 'Twere better than let so much flesh rot in the woods. We'll trade with them."

In a few minutes they had reached the caravan, and the Darfoors were glad to purchase the young princess. And away, away towards the distant west, where the great ships came on eagles' wings, and the white men loaded on them great hordes of human freightage, they bore Ubaba.

What mattered it to any how the dauntless Ntikkigama sacked the entire land of the Mabode in untiring quest of his daughter? What mattered the tears Alali shed, her sleepless nights, her broken heart? What mattered the mournings of Piriba, and the many friends of Ubaba; the priestesses and the sacred virgins? What mattered the home broken up, deprived of its light, its joy, its only happiness? What mattered blessed Kubanda, robbed of its future queen,—one whose noble ideals might have lifted it above any level it had yet reached? What mattered the line of the honored Ntikkigama which must perish with his daughter? What mattered, cruelest of all, the wounds and bruises, the hard blows and bitter words, the insults and inhumanity, the barbarity and indignity worse than death, the sleepless nights, the burning thoughts, the aching heart, that now became the lot of this simple child, lost to a world she had known and loved,—friendless, helpless, alone?

What mattered all these now? Ubaba was no more; and slave-girl Number 147 on board the mighty ship,—a proud and rather quiet savage from the wilds of Central Africa,—was worth some eighteen, perhaps twenty, good English pounds in the markets of Virginia or the West Indies.

PART II.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RECOVERED VOLUME.

Colonel Innisdale turned the worn volume over in his hand with a happy smile.

"Thank you, Culberson," he said. "Yes, it is the *Collection of Goldsmith's Poems* Major Crawford lent me. Where did you find it? I have searched for it everywhere."

"One of the negroes had it, sir," Culberson answered.

"I knew it. The thieving villains; they shall pay for this. Crawford had just lent it to me, and it was in my bag when I stopped with you in the field a month ago. It was stolen then. We'll put down these petty pilferings, Culberson, or flay off their black hides. Which of the rascals did you say it was?"

"That mulatto girl you bought from the Sutcliffe estates a few months back."

"Ha! That Fanny Morgan, eh? You'd never think it, looking at her. Didn't you make some report to me about her before?"

"I did, sir. That Fanny Morgan is a sly one, stubborn and saucy, and, withal, smarter than the average. But, of course, since you objected to my chastising the slaves, I can do nothing."

"Just so, Culberson; I understand that." The colonel waived aside his rage to mollify his overseer, whose injured tone had not escaped him. "I have no doubt you act with the best intentions; but negroes cost a lot of money these days; and, you know, the last two boys you flogged were unable to work for more than a

week after. But,'' he warmed up to the subject again, ''that has nothing to do with a case like this. Bring the girl, Culberson: she'll get such a flaying as she'll never forget.''

Culberson hastened from the office, and Colonel Innisdale paced the floor, the recovered book in his hand.

He was a man of less than medium height, with thick gray eye-brows, and large, kindly eyes, save when, like now, they grew fierce and glinted fire. He wore a white wig, powdered and scented, a red waistcoat embroidered with gold-colored lace, black satin knee-breeches, white silk stockings, and shoes of fine morocco, dyed blue. From a peg on the wall hung a three-cornered hat of black beaver, also trimmed with gold lace, and below it leaned a gold-headed cane.

In a few minutes Culberson returned. He was accompanied by a negress perhaps twenty years old, dressed in a single gown of coarse, striped cotton reaching down to her knees. She glared defiantly at Culberson, glanced at the colonel, then sank her eyes to the floor.

Innisdale met her with a snarl of rage.

''You, Fanny Morgan,'' he said, ''you had my book. Where did you get it? Come, speak up; no lying.''

''Please, sir, one of the negroes gave it to me,'' the girl answered in English surprisingly better than that generally used by slaves in colonial Virginia. ''He said he had found it on the dumping ground.''

''Lie,'' roared the colonel. ''It was stolen from my wallet in the field. Who gave it to you? Tell me that.''

''Please, sir, I do not remember.''

''You do not?'' cried Innisdale in a vehemence which shook the powder from his wig, and made the cobwebs tremble on the naked rafters. ''Imp of the devil, will you lie to me? I command you to name the thief.''

The girl did not appear awed by her master's anger. She hesitated for a second, then once more answered,

''Please, master, I do not remember.''

"That's how she is, sir," Culberson interjected *sotto voce*, "always stubborn and defiant."

"Enough," cried Innisdale. "To the whipping-post with her, Culberson. We'll see whether thirty lashes of the cat will not improve her memory or her manners."

The overseer led the girl from the room, and she offered no resistance. At the door he muttered,

"It is not too late to save you, girl, if you'll say the word."

She darted at him a glance which for a moment revealed the fire of hate she had so far repressed. Then, without other answer, she dragged herself forward in the direction of the whipping-post.

This institution of torture and chastisement was an indispensable adjunct to the plantation of every large slave-owner in Virginia, and stood in an open space at one end of the negro settlement, where all the other slaves could witness, and, as they chose, deride or pity the miserable malefactor. What the stocks and the ducking-stool were to the poor whites, the whipping-post represented to the negroes.

Either Fanny Morgan had never seen one of the negroes whipped, and so had no idea of the humiliating torture to which she was to be subjected, or else she had to the full acquired that stoicism which depraved helplessness eventually brings. Neither in feature nor in manner did she show the slightest sign of emotion, as she walked slowly to the post, and stood mute beside it.

Johnson Culberson, machiavelian in his methods of castigation, well knew his victim, and felt that her will had not yet been broken. That alone he wished to accomplish, yet that he surely would accomplish. In his own delay and the slave-girl's apprehensions he felt his strongest weapon. It had worked before, and could not fail him now.

Besides, Culberson had seen Miss Betty Innisdale, his employer's daughter, looking at him from a window of

the Great House as he crossed the yard. She had opened the door, and followed immediately. Culberson divined that it was her purpose to ask mercy for the culprit, as she had done two or three times before. As he did not really wish to punish the girl, it would doubly serve his purpose to pretend to be gratifying the young mistress and saving the girl at the same time, provided he had first tamed the wild temper of this young savage.

He fumbled with her hands, which he was tying around the post, while he spoke in a low conciliating tone:

"Don't be stubborn, Fanny. I can save you from this; can give you protection in future; food, clothing, rest, whatever you need. You lose nothing and gain all, if you will but——"

She dragged her hand from his, and in the single movement sent it crashing against his cheek,—one clear, ringing slap that sounded through the negro settlement.

"Wretch," cried Culberson, recovering from his astonishment, "you shall be sorry for that. Not all the countless devils of your accursed race shall protect you now, though you grovelled in the dust at my feet."

It was, indeed, a mutinous act; and not on any plantation in Virginia would it have been tolerated. Death itself would not, in some places, have been considered more than adequate punishment.

He lashed her hands around the post, the thongs cutting into the dark skin; but she neither winced nor groaned. Then he raised the heavy whip that was to wreak his vengeance.

"Wait, Culberson."

Miss Innisdale had seen the blow struck, and paused for a moment in confusion. Then she had, apparently, come to some sudden decision, for when her voice rang out, there was a tone of command which Culberson saw fit to ignore.

"Wait, Culberson; I would speak with the girl."

"Sorry, Miss Innisdale," answered Culberson, bowing,

and trying to conceal his chagrin, "but the colonel has ordered the girl thirty lashes for theft and insolence. You just saw her unprovoked attack on me. We cannot allow mutiny of the sort to go unpunished."

"I saw it, Culberson," said Miss Innisdale, "and shall deal with it fittingly. I have as little patience with insolence as you. Untie her hands."

"I regret that it is impossible to do as you request, Miss Innisdale," said Culberson, "though I should do most anything to please you. The colonel's orders have to be carried out."

"You mistake, Culberson," said Betty with cutting coolness. "It was an order, not a request. You have been here long enough to know that my commands are obeyed by all my father's servants, white or black. Untie the girl's hands."

Culberson knew his employer's hasty temper too well to oppose Miss Innisdale longer, for Miss Betty's word was always law on the plantation. He yielded, but with a bad grace.

"Very well, Miss Betty. But I shall report to Colonel Innisdale, and ask whose orders I should obey."

"Do so, Culberson. My father will, probably, show you your proper place."

Culberson unfastened the thongs, and the girl turned from the post. No look of gratitude was in her eyes for the lady who had saved her, but rather an expression of being bored. Miss Innisdale studied her inscrutable countenance for a silent minute, then turned towards the house.

"Girl, follow me," she said.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW MAID.

The mansion of Colonel Innisdale stood on a gentle slope overlooking the James River. The great old house, with its wide, flat frontage, and its two massive chimneys on either end, like overgrown ears on the head of some giant cat, sat sedately on the brow of the eminence.

In front stretched a close-cropped lawn, green in the spring sunshine, with here and there a stately oak or beech or hickory, from the dense leafage of which came the chirp of a robin or the flutter of a blue-bird, while beneath its inviting shade stood a squat wooden bench, upon which the master or his family would often spend several restful hours.

To the right, and slightly to the rear of the "Great House," stood the kitchen, a low wooden structure, with wide fire-place and a massive brick chimney, to which the building seemed a humble and unnecessary appendage. Farther to the right, to the very edge of the dense woodland, stretched several acres of green vegetables for the kitchen use,—peas, cabbages, turnips, melons, pumpkins, potatoes and corn, in the rank profusion of a virgin country.

To the rear of the kitchen and the garden, stood a row of dilapidated wooden cottages, the residences of the white servants. Still behind these, like a straggling hamlet of rude wooden huts, rose the residences of the slaves, the dark columns of smoke rising from them indicating that the various "mammies" were busy preparing the evening meal of hog and hominy.

The massive barns and store-houses were on the left of the mansion, flanked by the smithy, the mill-house,

and the work-shops of the several artisans; for the Virginian plantation was always self-contained, and rarely needed help from without.

In front of these, occupying the left of the wide lawn, was a magnificent garden of flowers; the choicest varieties of two continents, laid out with artistic taste, and tended with infinite care. It was at one end of this, in the shade of a large cherry tree, that Beatrice Innisdale sank upon a small bench, the inscrutable negress still beside her.

Rather slight for her height, Beatrice did not look her twenty-one years. The proud curve of her chin was belied by the large, kindly black eyes and frank, open brows, just as the plump arms and full rounded throat contradicted the suggestion of frailty.

She wore an elaborately designed dress of finest imported muslin, the trim bodice adorned with the richest French laces, and the full skirt hooped, and covered with frill upon frill from the waist down to the hem. As she crossed her legs, one tiny shoe peeped out from its snug retreat: it was of choice white velvet, low around the ankles, and fastened with a single gold buckle.

For a moment Miss Innisdale bestowed an appraising glance upon the variegated scene that stretched before her, then she fixed her gaze upon the girl.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Fanny Morgan, ma'am."

"Why did you strike Culberson?"

The girl stared stolidly at her, but did not answer.

"Come, girl, answer me truly. You need have no fear."

"I am not afraid, Miss," the negress answered with a touch of defiance. "I have no excuse."

"I am not asking you for an excuse," said Miss Innisdale. "Just tell me the truth. I saw him speak to you. What did he say?"

Again she did not answer. She showed no interest in the interview.

"Well, why don't you answer me?" asked the lady, tapping her foot impatiently.

"I had heard that slaves who struck their masters were killed. I believed it."

For a single instant there was a note of desperation in her voice, and her fierce black eyes glistened. Betty Innisdale gazed up at her in surprise, but before she could fully comprehend the words, the girl's features were as inexpressive as before.

"Poor child," she sighed. "Have they been unkind to you?"

Still she was silent.

Miss Innisdale rose impatiently.

"Fanny Morgan," she said, "I had taken an interest in you, and wished to befriend you, but your stubborn insolence is tiring. You may go."

She turned away without so much as a glance at her young mistress. Beatrice watched her silently for a moment, then called to her once more.

"Fanny Morgan, you will report to me here to-morrow morning, instead of going to the field. I have work for you."

She paused till her mistress had finished speaking, but did not turn. Then she drifted slowly across the lawn in the direction of the negro quarters.

Beatrice Innisdale turned from watching the girl, and walked towards the house. At one end she tapped lightly at the door of a small room, then pushed it open and entered.

"Dad," she said, "I want another maid."

Colonel Innisdale looked up quickly, a proud smile hovering about his mouth and eyes.

"You do, darling? White or black?" he asked.

"I have just selected that light-tinted girl you bought

from the Sutcliffes a few months back,—Fanny Morgan, they call her.''

''Fanny Morgan?'' gasped the colonel. ''Why, she's not a suitable girl for you, Bet. Culberson gives a very bad report of her.''

''Culberson is serving his own ends, dad; not yours. The girl is tender-hearted, resolute, faithful and brave. I'm always roaming the woods alone, and need just such an attendant.''

''Surely you do, sweetheart,'' Innisdale agreed, ''but the girl has none of those qualities. The overseer must know her better than you do.''

''If he does, which is probable, he must have his own reasons for deceiving you, dad. Some day you may discover that Culberson is not the angel he pretends to be.''

''What do you mean, Bet?''

''Oh, I have no charge to make against him,'' answered Miss Innisdale. ''I have shown him his place, and I trust he will not again forget. But I pity even the negroes in his power.''

''Has he been insolent to you, Bet? If so, I'll horse-whip the——''

''We'll drop that for the present, dad,'' said Beatrice with an air of finality. ''We're talking about the girl. I have a favorite nook in the woods, where I like to sit and read. About a week ago, I was sitting there alone, when I saw three of the boys approach. On a bough of a near-by tree was a bird's nest. They started throwing stones at it. In a minute they had knocked it over, throwing its tiny birdlings to the ground.

''At that moment, Fanny Morgan emerged from the thicket. As soon as she saw what the boys were doing, she rated them soundly for it, and tried to recover the young birds. One of the boys,—a big black bully they called Bill,—pushed her away vigorously. She turned

on him, and struck him a blow which sent him reeling backwards.

"He came back at her like a mad bull, but the girl sprang swiftly out of reach of his mighty fists, then, quick as lightning, sent her own crashing into the base of his skull. The bully sank to the ground. She stood over him till he rose, but the laugh was on the other side, and Bill, with his two companions, moved sullenly away, leaving the girl in possession of the field.

"She gathered up the tiny birds, looked them over carefully, smoothed out their scanty down, then, nestling them in her bosom, mounted the tree. She reached the nest, once more fastened it in its place, laid the nestlings cosily in it, and slid down again. None of them saw me, and I did not interfere. What do you think of that?"

"It was fine of her, Bet," Innisdale answered. "Yet that is all you know of the girl."

"Not all, dad. That made me interested in her. When I saw her marshalled in here by Culberson a while ago, I knew he had made some report on her, and,—yes, dad, I listened.

"I heard her refuse to tell you who had given her the book. Of course, that is the insubordination you termed it, yet, to me, her submitting to be whipped rather than betray another appeared in a different light. But, at the door, Culberson told her that he was still able to save her if she'd only say the word. She tore herself from him angrily, and proceeded to the whipping-post. There, under pretence of binding her, he continued to plead with her. At length, she tore her hand away, and gave him a vicious blow on the mouth. Yet she refuses to tell me a word of what her tormentor said."

"If I knew that Culberson could be so mean," said Innisdale slowly, "I'd——"

"We are not discussing Johnson Culberson," snapped Miss Betty. "I know nothing, and care nothing about

him. I have instructed Fanny Morgan to report to me in the morning.''

''Do just what you think best, dear. I hope you have not been deceived in this girl.''

''Thank you, dad. Some day you'll see that I am right.''

Meanwhile, Fanny Morgan had proceeded quietly to the negro quarters. Here she walked about as if in search of some one. At length she spied the object of her quest.

''Here, you Cuffy; come here,'' she called.

A stalwart young negro approached diffidently.

''Laws 'a' massy!'' he exclaimed; ''wa's matter, Fanny, you look so bex?''

''Where did you get that book you gave me?'' Fanny asked .

''Don't Ah tol' you Ah fin' it at de dumps?'' Cuffy answered uneasily.

''Yes, you told me that,'' the girl replied, ''but it was not true. You stole it from the master's bag when he was out in the fields.''

''Laws, Fanny, you didn't get trouble 'bout it, did you?''

''That's nothing to do with it, Cuffy. You know I shouldn't have accepted it if I knew you had stolen it. I have no use for thieves,—and liars.''

''But—but, Fanny,'' Cuffy stammered, ''Ah didn't mean you to get trouble for it; hones', Ah didn't. But Ah lub you, Fanny, an' when Ah see how you was jes' nacherally cut up ober dat oder ol' book what you losted, Ah jes' made up my min' dat Ah had to git you anoder. You am not bex wid me, Fanny, am you? Ah done it 'cause Ah lub——''

''Ah, cut out that,'' said the girl sharply. ''I don't want to hear any more of it. And listen you, Cuffy. As long as you live, I don't want you ever to speak to me again. I hate a thief, and I am not going to have

any dealings with one. That's what I sought you out to tell you."

"Aw, please, please, Fanny," wailed the youth, "don' be so hard on a feller what try to done someth'n fe you. Ah nebber thought de marster would 'a' know 'bout it; but, ef you say de word, Fanny, Ah'll jes go right up to him now an' tell him it was me, an' not you, what took his ol' book, jes' so's Ah might see your sweet smile, an' hear your sweet voice again. Hones', Fanny, Ah lub you, an' Ah can't——"

"What atonement you wish to make," said the girl with cold finality, "can be no concern of mine. I have said all I wished to say."

She turned away from the whining creature, humming a lively little air, as if the world held not a care for her.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO SAVAGES.

The gulf between the house-slave and the field-slave was hardly narrower than that which separated the wealthy planter from the "poor white" in colonial Virginia. Indeed, the house-slave considered himself the superior of the white man who did not own a plantation and negro slaves to toil for him.

This favored menial was often the companion and confidant of his white master or mistress. In dress, in language and in demeanor, he was unquestionably above his brother of the field, and his general interest in the entire fortune of the estate lent to his lot a sense of security and contentment unknown to the other.

This gulf Fanny Morgan crossed with alacrity. Aunt 'Lizbeth, the gray-headed and devoted old mammy of all at Innismount, welcomed her with open arms, and made her feel at home from the very start. Miss Innisdale, prejudiced in favor of the girl, and additionally sympathetic since the single note of despair she had surprised from Fanny, was strongly drawn to her, and tried to fathom the mystery of her nature.

Of these kindnesses Fanny Morgan was not unappreciative. She obeyed the orders of her mistress with faithful promptness, and studied her wishes so well that soon she need not wait for the spoken word. In her dealings with the other servants, she cultivated a spirit of communal good-will which helped to make life pleasanter for all around. Yet, withal, Fanny retained a silent aloofness, an unwillingness to discuss either her own actions or any other matter that did not come

directly into the business of the day, which rendered her every act, and her very self, much of a mystery.

"Did you finish reading *Goldsmith's Poems?*" Miss Innisdale asked her as she came upon her dusting the library one morning.

"Yes, ma'am; twice," she answered. "It is a wonderful book."

"It is," Betty assented. "What other books have you read?"

"I read one called the *New Testament,* and another called the *Boston Almanac,*" she replied; "also some newspapers."

"That's very good. How did you learn to read?"

She hesitated for a moment.

"I learnt the letters long ago," she answered. "Then there was an old woman on the Sutcliffe Plantation who could read, and I used to go to her of evenings and beg her to teach me."

"I am pleased to hear that, Fanny," said the lady. "There are many who contend that books should be placed beyond the reach of negroes, but I am not one of them. I believe there are many valuable lessons which your people can learn from our best books, and whenever it is possible, I shall allow you to read some of them."

"I thank you, Miss Betty," the girl answered, and her eyes sparkled. "I love books."

"Did you know your father?" Miss Innisdale asked innocently after a pause. For the conditions which, in spite of ill-framed laws laxly enforced or wholly disregarded, were then filling Virginia with that hybrid race of which the girl seemed one, were not unknown to Betty. But Fanny did not understand the question.

"Of course I did," she answered sharply.

"Ah, then he taught you to read."

"No ma'am. He cannot read."

"Indeed? Where is he?"

Her bosom rose and fell. Then she turned away from her mistress without giving an answer. So all enquiries into her life had been balked.

Miss Innisdale loved the open. Often she would go for long rides over the miserable country roads, or through the flat plains which skirted the river. At other times she would spend several hours in the woods and forests that fringed her father's estate. On these, she would often take the girl with her; and Fanny seemed to share her love for the wilds and her interest in the beauties of nature. In this way there speedily grew between the pair that strong attachment proverbial between the southern mistress and her favored negro attendant.

One other person enjoyed Miss Innisdale's complete confidence. She was Eleanor Crawford, only daughter of Major Crawford, whose plantation adjoined that of Colonel Innisdale, though their residences were some ten miles apart.

The two girls possessed little in common. Eleanor's robust figure was adorned by a rather florid face, blue eyes, and golden hair. Beatrice, frail and slender, had eyes and hair of jet, with a complexion which had made no less a connoisseur in wine and women than Lord Dunmore himself declare her "the Rose of Virginia, and the most beautiful woman outside of England." Eleanor was gay and witty, where her friend was quiet and serious; and though Miss Crawford danced magnificently and rode with skill, she was wholly unequal to the physical exertions of the other.

Yet they were almost inseparable, and were together whenever the opportunity offered itself, either at the one residence or the other.

One of these opportunities invariably came whenever a ship from England arrived at either plantation, bringing its rich load of wines, silks, woollens and muslins, shoes, hats, carpets, furniture, tools, and other neces-

saries and luxuries; and taking in return an equally valuable cargo of colonial produce,—corn, butter, pork, fur, skins and leather, but principally tobacco.

The *Nightbird* now stood at Colonel Innisdale's wharf. From its hold the seamen were unloading countless boxes and chests, while a never-ending stream of servants, white and black, were conveying these to the store-houses.

Beatrice and her friend, standing on the little wooden pier, watched the proceedings interestedly. Several boats hung around; for it was customary in these days of uncertain shipping facilities for all neighboring planters to receive whatever small packages they could obtain from England by the first vessel consigned to any one of the plantations.

A small boat came down the river, guided by a tall, dark Indian, and bearing a load of furs; while in its bow sat his son, a child of five or six. The Indians were then on friendly terms with the planters; and though Pennsylvania generally offered them a better market, they sometimes brought their goods into Virginia also, to exchange them for the articles which their white neighbors had taught them to use.

The Indian tied his boat to the wharf, under the side of the ship, and sprang ashore. Colonel Innisdale had taken the captain and his chief officers up to the house; and it devolved upon Culberson, who was directing the work then proceeding, to barter with the red-skin.

Culberson had before this openly averred his detestation of Indians, and his opposition to trading with them. The red man knew, on the other hand, that lower down the river he was sure to obtain a better market for his commodities;—indeed, it was only his seeing the ship there that made him stop.

At the same instant, Miss Innisdale and her companion approached the narrow gang-plank, with the evident intention of boarding the ship. Culberson, eager

to win the young lady's esteem, hastily sprang beside Beatrice, and, seizing her arm, led her up on the deck. It was at this unfortunate moment that the Indian accosted him with an offer of his wares.

Culberson, completely ignoring the savage, returned to Miss Crawford, and assisted her, too, up the slippery way. The Indian, following aboard, once more repeated his offer. The overseer, himself a giant in strength, turned towards him with a snarl of rage, and before the Indian could sense his purpose, the white man lifted him bodily and threw him over the side of the ship.

The Indian's head struck heavily against the edge of his own boat, at which he had made a fruitless clutch, upsetting the craft, and throwing its contents into the water. A cloud of spray rose from the surface. When it cleared away, the man, partially stunned by the blow but instinctively a strong swimmer, was surrounded by bobbing bundles of fur and an overturned boat.

A hoarse laugh greeted the Indian's discomfiture; for the servants well knew that any show of sympathy would have roused the overseer's wrath. At that instant the Indian uttered a cry which drew all eyes to him, and then, nearly a hundred feet down stream, where the strong current had borne it, a tiny hand, as if raised to heaven in one last mute appeal, sank out of sight.

A score of hearts must have been touched by the imminent tragedy, yet, whether from fear of Culberson's disapproval or from fear of ridicule, no one moved to offer aid; no one save——

Fanny Morgan was still standing where her mistress had left her on going aboard the ship. She heard the Indian's cry, she saw his child disappear, and she knew, superb swimmer though he was, he could not reach the spot before it was too late. From where she stood, the distance could hardly be less. She ran to the lower end of the pier, bounded horizontally through the air, and struck the water some fifteen feet away. Her scanty

dress impeded her little: she glided over the water as if it had been her natural element; and in a few seconds she had passed the spot where the child had disappeared. She peered searchingly down beneath her, then over her, too, the water closed.

For a long minute she did not reappear: when at last the black mass rose to the surface, the child was clasped to her bosom. She shook the water from her head, passed her hand over the child's face, pressed him nearer to her bosom, turned on her back, and swam to the bank.

She lifted the child out of the water, and laid him on the grass. Miss Innisdale and Eleanor hastened to her side. The Indian joined them, and bent over his child, dripping and breathing hard. But his copper-hued countenance bore not a mark of emotion. Nor did Fanny Morgan's.

The child breathed. The girl turned away, and sprang into the water once more. She caught the three bundles of fur that bobbed about, and pushed them upon the bank. She returned to the spot where the child lay. His eyes were open now, and he breathed easily. She gazed down upon him for a moment, then, without a word, turned towards the pier.

Nor did the Indian speak. But he fastened upon her a gaze which she was never to forget. Do savage natures understand each other better than those more highly civilized?

"It was a beautiful thing to do," said Miss Crawford to her that evening. "Why, Fanny, you are an expert swimmer. You must give us lessons."

"I love the water, Miss Eleanor," she answered simply. "I just naturally couldn't resist the temptation to plunge in and have one more swim." She turned away, as if to avoid further remarks on the subject.

"I'll say it was lucky for the Indian," Miss Crawford laughed. "However, Fanny has made a friend, and

Culberson an enemy. Did you observe the look he gave them both?''

''I did,'' Beatrice answered. ''Culberson is a coarse, heartless villain. Do you know he has approached me, too?''

''He dared? The upstart!''

Beatrice nodded.

''And it was from him I rescued this girl.''

''You have told your father?''

''I have not,'' Beatrice replied slowly. ''You know how hot-tempered my father is,—and—I can take care of myself. Besides, Culberson is efficient as an overseer, and I do not wish to accept the responsibility for any change that might work less satisfactorily. But we'll not talk of Culberson. Tell me what Ollie says.''

Oliver Innisdale was Betty's only brother, and Eleanor's sweetheart. After a brilliant career at William and Mary, he was now in his last year at Oxford. He wrote whenever there was a boat for Virginia, and both girls had received letters from him that day.

''I?'' Eleanor disclaimed playfully. ''Why, he didn't tell me anything, except that you would give me all the news.''

''Oh, I see,'' laughed Betty. ''Your letter is entirely personal, while mine is intended to be public property. Well, my loving—I mean, lovesick—brother, after finishing your epistle, only found time to tell me that he had been hoping to be with us for Christmas, but hardly thinks it will be possible; and that he expects to be accompanied by a friend.''

''Yes, Oliver mentioned him in my letter,'' said Eleanor; ''Major Pressley, a wonderful personage, and most likable, Ollie says.''

''Oh, Ollie is always gushing about his friends, dear. I do hope Major Pressley will tell us some of the beautiful

things he is now saying of a certain dainty little flower that he left in Virginia.''

''I am hoping a great deal more than that,'' Eleanor retorted. ''I am hoping that he'll teach you, in the only way in which a woman learns, not to taunt others for that womanliness to which you are too proud to submit. I am hoping that he will humble you at his feet.''

Beatrice laughed uproariously.

''No fear of that, dear,'' she replied. ''The flowers, the wood-lands, the blue ridges of lovely Virginia,—those are my only love, and nothing shall ever separate me from them.''

''Wait,'' said Eleanor enigmatically. ''Before long you'll sing another tune, unless the Greatest of Artists, when he made you the loveliest picture in all America, failed to endow you with a woman's heart.''

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER THE RACES.

The Englishman is essentially a sportsman, and wherever he has travelled, he has carried his sports with him.

When Englishmen crossed three thousand miles of ocean, and founded a home and a country among the Virginian forests, one of the first things for which they hankered was the introduction of English pastimes; and as soon as prosperity was assured, British sports were rapidly introduced, often with embellishments suited to a new and growing country.

Horse-racing was the contest dearest to the heart of the age, and as soon as the Virginian had completed his little wooden church and laid out his court-house, he started to design his race-track,—the third great institution of the kingdom. As the tide of civilization drifted slowly westward, new country was opened up, new settlements were made, and new race-tracks designed.

The newest of these was that of Colonel Innisdale. It had been laid out on a lovely plain some five miles from his residence, and the date of its opening was widely advertised.

From early morning the miserable, rutty road that led to the track was crowded with pedestrians and horsemen, and by nine o'clock the field was fairly crowded.

The throng was thoroughly representative of the country. The planters,—the aristocrats of the land,—were most conspicuous, for they were the owners of the horses, and the only participants in the chief event. But the poorer classes, too, were well in evidence, and for them several minor games had been arranged. And from the

fringe of the crowd might even have been observed the broad grin of a free negro, who had come to see the favorite "hoss" of his beloved "marster" romp home to victory; for the law prohibiting freed negroes from remaining in Virginia was seldom, if ever, enforced.

Colonel Matthew Innisdale, one of the wealthiest of the Virginian planters, a member of the House of Burgesses and a Justice of the Peace, walked slowly through the crowd, on one arm his daughter,—for the colonel was a widower,—his gold-laced, three-cornered hat of black beaver under his arm, and in his hand the inevitable gold-headed cane. As he bowed right and left to friends and acquaintances, his highly-scented white wig loosened a small shower of powder which soon formed a tiny white ridge on each shoulder. Yet the aristocracy of Virginia was entirely democratic, as the colonel's running salutations proved.

"Good morning, Colonel Harris; how's your lady?—Why, Doctor Jones, I'm delighted to see you.—Morning, Jackson; I see you took the day off.—Mrs. Carter, madam, my heart is at your feet. You look as charming as ever.—Ah, Colonel Henry, what are the parsons saying over in Louisa?—Colonel Washington, I hear you have decided to run that filly of yours against——"

The last individual, a stately military figure wearing a sword at his belt, lifted his hat, and, with the suave bow of a courtier, raised Betty's proffered hand to his lips.

"Why, Miss Innisdale," he said, "I daily form a higher opinion of Lord Dunmore's judgment. We are all getting dreadfully jealous of your father; he monopolizes your company so much."

Beatrice laughed pleasantly, and the speaker, thrusting his hand into that of the colonel, turned to answer his unfinished question.

"Yes, Colonel Innisdale, I have entered my little mare for the race. I learnt that you intended to run your

Wildfire, and I thought it would only be a kind act to send along my *Duchess of Richmond* to show him the way home."

"You were misinformed, Colonel," Beatrice interjected. "*Wildfire* is my entry, and will lead the field. Ladies first, you know."

"True, Miss Innisdale," Washington laughed. "*Duchess of Richmond* is the lady in the case, and will surely be first. I'll wager you a dozen pairs of French silk gloves against a bottle of the colonel's burgundy to that."

"Thanks, Colonel," Miss Innisdale replied. "I am really in need of some new gloves. I wear threes. You'll send them to Innismount, won't you?"

"No," answered Washington, "but I'll call for the burgundy, and ask you to aid me in emptying the bottle."

There was a sudden bustle of excitement, and, looking round, they saw that the governor's coach was approaching. It was a heavy, cumbersome wagon, precariously high, drawn by four lovely bays. A committee of welcome met the governor, and led him, red-faced and panting from the exertions of his long ride, over part of the field to the canopy that had been provided for him near the judges' stand.

"It's a fine field, Colonel; a lovely site," puffed Dunmore, "but, egad, why have it so far out of the world? And the road! phew! I could hear my ribs rattle every time we tumbled over a root or vaulted a chasm. Egad, Colonel, but I am dry."

The governor's thirst was quenched from a silver flagon. The band,—violins, flutes and drums,—having at last finished the national anthem, struck up a lively dance, and the festivities started in full swing.

The amusements provided for the common people were varied, and created laughter, cheers or hisses as the sympathies of the crowd swayed. A straight pole, thickly painted with grease, was set up to be climbed; and a fat

pig, similarly coated, was to be caught by the tail. There were bouts at wrestling and at quarter-staves, with dancing and foot-racing under varying conditions.

Then followed the greater events of the day,—the contests between the best stables of Virginia; and sombre magistrates, dignified soldiers, and dainty ladies alike cheered themselves hoarse as their various favorites won undying fame. When at last the lowering sun warned the throng to disperse, all agreed that they had spent a wonderful day.

Wildfire had won for his mistress Colonel Washington's gloves by half-a-neck, and Miss Innisdale was in high glee as she rode the champion out of the grounds, having changed from the quiet saddle-mare she had ridden that morning. Eleanor Crawford rode beside her, while their fathers and several of the best horsemen of the country followed close behind.

The racer, now thoroughly warmed up, fidgeted and capered threateningly at the sound of hoofs around, but Beatrice was a superb horsewoman, and the antics of the excited horse only served to show off the graces of the rider.

"Let him out," suggested Miss Crawford, herself an excellent equestrienne mounted on a magnificent gray. "We'll see who is who."

She brought her own whip down as she spoke, and the two horses leapt forward together. Those behind set spurs to their mounts, and the chase was on in real earnest, with the leading pair drawing steadily away from the rest, even though it was plain that *Wildfire* was being held in.

It was a villainous road, with miry ruts, and outgrown roots, and rolling stones at every step; but there was not one there who had not previously negotiated a dozen worse.

Wildfire tripped on a loose stone, losing a single instant while Miss Crawford forged ahead. Beatrice caught him

up deftly, and at the same time playfully flicked his flank with her whip. He sprang forward, and passed the gray at a bound. It was a burst of speed in which the girl would have gloried, but ahead the road curved sharply, with thick woods on either side, and she knew that there were many persons in front. She tried to check his speed.

Wildfire tossed his head, the bit between his teeth, and sprang forward with greater swiftness. She bent low, and jerked at the reins, hoping to dislodge his hold; with a snap the ribbons came loose in her hand, broken where they buckled to the bit. The break threw her far back on the rump of the horse; with almost superhuman agility, she regained her seat.

Wildfire darted forward with renewed vigor, now that the slight check on him had been removed. She knew he'd gallop home, half-a-mile distant; she had no power to stop him. She crouched low in the saddle, rising with his every rise, swaying with his every movement, as light and as immovable as a bird upon a quivering bough, and as graceful.

The road curved. She bent low over the racer's neck, stiffened her stirrup foot, and braced herself for the swerve. Like a flash of light they swept around, and then, a hundred yards ahead, the governor's coach, heavy and unwieldy, lumbered down the narrow road!

She shrieked a warning, and held up the useless reins that they might understand. The driver saw. He whipped up his horses, and tried to turn aside. One wheel of the carriage mounted a ledge where a root lay bare; the other sank into a rut. The massive, top-heavy coach toppled over, precipitating its occupants into the dust, and completely blocking the way.

Fifty, forty, thirty yards behind, thundered the maddened racer. No power could stop him now. Beatrice knew he would try to take the leap, and she knew, jumper though he was, he could not make it. Yet

she could do nothing. She braced herself for the spring, resolved to give him what aid she could.

Twenty yards! She measured the distance with the eye of the experienced hurdler. She pressed her lips together, held her breath, and then——

Out of the hedge that bordered the road, a dark, sinuous figure bounded. It might have been a panther striking at its prey, or a serpent hurtling itself through the air, but it was human. By some miraculous precision that could hardly be more than mere chance, the fingers found the rings of the bit. The racer rose in the air, came back to earth, snorted, tossed his head, sprang forward, and then sank back on its haunches overmastered, its nose against the upturned wheel of Lord Dunmore's coach. At its head stood Fanny Morgan, one muscular hand in the horse's bit, the other pressed against her mistress, steadying her in the saddle. Her naked foot had been cut by the flying hoofs, and her bare knee bruised, but her hold was unbreakable.

Beatrice slid from the saddle, and hastened to the governor, who had risen to his feet and was brushing the dust from his clothing.

"I trust you are not hurt, my lord," she said. "I'm sorry——"

"Tush, it is nothing," his lordship answered. "But you, egad, it was a narrow shave. How did she——"

Beatrice returned to where the slave-girl stood, and took *Wildfire* from her.

"Go up to the house at once, Fanny," she said. "Let Aunt 'Lizbeth attend to your wounds immediately, and put you to bed. I shall be there in a few minutes."

The rest of the party trailed in. Eleanor had witnessed the entire scene. Lord Dunmore related it to the others as the company walked slowly up to Colonel Innisdale's mansion, where a sumptuous banquet awaited them.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BREAK.

The service Fanny Morgan had rendered to her mistress and to Lord Dunmore made her a privileged personage both among the negro servants and in the eyes of the white people on Colonel Innisdale's estate.

Generally she was in attendance upon Beatrice, who continued her long rambles in the woods, where she sometimes spent several hours in some sheltered nook on the fringes of the great forests, reading or knitting, or studying nature. The girl had been taught to knit and sew, and had found several opportunities to indulge her love for books, so that she generally shared in whatever her mistress did.

On other occasions, she remained in the house, where, under the careful eyes of Aunt 'Lizbeth, or of Beatrice herself, she gave valuable aid in the kitchen, the laundry, or some other of the domestic departments of the great mansion.

The girl's rich musical voice had attracted the attention of her mistress, and Beatrice had given her what aid she could in cultivating it. To this she had added the harp and the virginal, which she played with some degree of skill, and the girl had showed remarkable aptitude in mastering these instruments.

This close association drew the girl towards her young mistress with a strong attachment beneficial to both. They were of about the same age, and, despite their different conditions, their different trainings, and their different hopes for the future, there was between them a similarity of taste, thought and ideals which often bridged the gulf separating two alien races.

Yet Beatrice could never fully comprehend this strange companion of hers. She was in all things a mass of contradictions. Young, vivacious and healthy, she was, nevertheless, quiet and uncommunicative almost to moroseness. That she was whole-heartedly grateful for the kindness of her mistress Beatrice never had any doubt, yet the girl openly resented any show of sympathy, and strove consistently to present her best actions in a less unselfish light. She soon became an interesting subject of study to her mistress, and daily new phases of her vari-colored character exhibited themselves.

One morning Major Crawford's butler arrived with a letter from Eleanor for Miss Innisdale. Fanny took it up to Betty's sitting-room, and the girl, sinking into a couch, read with amusement.

"My dear Betty," Miss Crawford had written, "won't you please help me out of a difficult situation? It is, I am sure, one which you can handle much more efficiently than I, perhaps because you have less experience. Or haven't you?

"Briefly, dear, the position is this: Our Walter Hogslip has confided to me that he has been smitten by the charms (*charms,* my dear!) of your Fanny Morgan, and that he would give the world, or such part of the world as is in his power to give, to make her Mrs. Hogslip. And he has besought me with tears,—real tears, dear,—to aid him in the matter, and to plead his cause—with you.

"Honest, though, Bet, I pity the poor fellow, and am anxious to help him if it is possible. Of course, I know how highly you prize the girl, and am afraid you will be unwilling to part with her, but if that is the insurmountable objection, perhaps it could be so arranged that she should not have to leave you. Your father and mine could discuss that detail.

"Walter, I am sure, is the best of his race, and your

Fanny could never do better. As you know, he has been freed for services which certainly deserved freedom. Since then he has still worked for us, and has not changed a whit. He has saved fifteen pounds, and father has promised to let him have enough more to pay the full price of your Fanny if you'll only say the word. You see, dear, we all have confidence in him.

"I know you have a heart which loves, and which loves love, though you try to pretend you haven't. And I am so sure you will pity poor Walter, that I have given him the day off. Can you give your Fanny an hour, so that they can arrange the matter between themselves?

"That's two in the family. Aren't you getting jealous?"

Beatrice folded the letter, and sat looking into the farther wall for five silent minutes, lost in thought. Then she summoned Fanny Morgan to her. For another minute she studied the girl intently before she spoke.

"Is Major Crawford's butler down-stairs?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You know him well, don't you?"

"I have seen him several times, ma'am, and have spoken with him."

"Miss Eleanor speaks very highly of him," said Beatrice. "I suppose you know that he is a free negro."

"Yes, ma'am; I've heard so."

"Well, he has a holiday to-day, and would like to roam around our place a bit. I am giving you the day off, so that you can show him around."

"Thank you, Miss Betty. You are very kind."

"Miss Crawford seems to think as highly of Walter as I do of you, Fanny; and that's a whole lot."

There was a plaintive note of tenderness in the words, which the sharp ears of the slave-girl readily detected, —and misinterpreted.

"I know it, Miss Betty," she answered. "If I don't

show that I do, it is because I'm not made that way. But I'll try."

Beatrice smiled kindly.

"You may go, Fanny," she said. "Have a happy day,—and you needn't be in any hurry to return. Tell Aunt 'Lizbeth to leave dinner for you both."

She stood at the open window, and watched the dusky pair saunter lazily across the lawn and out among the trees. She saw his shiny-black, amorous eye-balls apparently devouring the smaller, well-knit figure that meant his world: she saw the girl's pearly teeth upturned to her massive escort's face, as if her lips drank in his words. She caught a ripple of laughter, swept through the trees on a stray flutter of wind. She knew that they were happy.

Her gaze drifted past them. It swept the fields, the flowers, the wood-lands, and rested upon the distant ridges of hazy blue. These were *her* love—she had said. She breathed a sigh. But she was smiling. This?—or that?

A rap at the door disturbed her reverie. She moved lightly across the room, and pulled the door open. Johnson Culberson stood without.

"May I have a few words with you, Miss Innisdale?" Culberson asked. "I have waited a long time for an opportunity when you would be alone and not otherwise engaged, as what I have to say is for your ears alone."

Without replying, she held the door open for him to enter, then pointed to a chair.

Dressed in his "Sunday clothes," the overseer was by no means a repellent figure. His frock of black broadcloth reached to his knees. He wore a scarlet silk waistcoat decorated with fine white lace, green satin doublet, blue silk stockings, and red morocco shoes. His long black hair was gathered into a single queue, tied with red ribbon and thickly powdered. Nearly six feet tall, with broad, square shoulders, he moved with the ease and

agility of a man long trained to military service. It was only his crafty, shifting, calculating, sea-green eyes, lurking a habitual scowl, that instinctively repelled those upon whom it cast its fitful glare.

Culberson was the trusted overseer of Colonel Innisdale's plantation, and, in the free-and-easy hospitality of the Virginian gentleman of the age, was at liberty to roam through the "home house" with a freedom which would be appalling to the present age. Hence, his visit to the suite of the young mistress, though unexpected and unprecedented, was not surprising.

Beatrice waited for him to speak, but he did not.

"Well, I am alone," she said, "and, for the moment, disengaged. What is it?"

"When one looks into your eyes, Miss Innisdale," he said with an air of gallantry, "it becomes hard to say even the things that were uppermost in his mind."

"I'll turn my back, if that'll help you," Beatrice answered prosaically.

"Be not unkind, Miss Innisdale. We pity rather than censure the owl for being blinded by the sunlight."

"I was never so unkind as to think of associating you with the owl," she answered with a cold smile.

"You have a biting wit, Miss Innisdale," he said. "But, indeed, I knew that long before; and it is in atonement for some little lapses which have occasioned it in the past that I have come. I feel that on two or three occasions, my want of forethought, my crudity of manner, my haste of expression, or my strict obedience to your father has brought your displeasure; and I have spent several miserable days wondering how to make amends."

"If there were any such," said Beatrice, "I have completely forgotten them."

"It is very kind of you to do so, Miss Innisdale, and I am eternally grateful. It does not excuse my own defects, but only accentuates your greatness of heart.

I assure you, Miss Innisdale, I have never had any thought but to win your good-will."

"Then we'll call that matter settled," said Beatrice. "Is there anything else?"

"There is a lot more, Miss Innisdale," he answered slowly, "but it is hard to say. Could I be sure of your sympathy——"

He paused, like one who feels his way in utter darkness.

"Say it," she replied.

Habitually kind-tempered, habitually sweet-toned, her words conveyed no hint of warning.

"Miss Innisdale," said Culberson, gathering courage, "I shall tell you what I have told no other in wide Virginia. My father was an English peer. My only brother, aged and childless, sits in the House of Lords."

She was intently watching the narrowed eyes that avoided her gaze. She made no answer.

"Five years ago I came to Virginia. Yes, I'll be frank with you. There were circumstances that made my coming necessary, and made me assume a name that is not mine; but they were purely family matters which time has effaced and left no blot on our name.

"At first I resolved to become a Virginian planter; to purchase land and horses and slaves. Maturer thoughts decided me that this would be unwise. My stay in the colony could not be for long, and any effort in that direction would have been partially wasted. For a while I drifted about purposeless.

"Then I saw you, by chance. You were hardly more than a girl, and rode with your father to Williamsburg. That day I knew my destiny: it was to be a slave for life;—your slave.

"I dogged your footsteps; I learnt your name; I sought an introduction to your father. I begged him for a position,—any position that would keep me near to

you. He needed an overseer for his plantation: I jumped at the offer.

"I came to Innismount, feeling that it would be heaven;—and it was heaven, for you were near, and you were all I worshipped. I served your father faithfully, even as Jacob served Laban, hoping I might thereby merit the reward he won. You were ever cold and distant to me, which must be natural, considering that you looked upon me only as your father's servant. Yet I hoped that time would soften your heart towards me.

"But there is no more time to wait; the moment for action has come. I must return to my country, and to my people. Miss Innisdale, I have bared my soul to you. I throw myself at your feet. May I not take with me to England the loveliest flower Virginia blooms?"

The impetuous flow of words had hushed the girl when she tried to stop its current. She realized now that she had permitted him to say too much. Yet she was hardly to blame. She lived in an age when ardent love-making was common-place, and only a mark of "good breeding," —ardent love-making that meant nothing but fulsome flattery, and led nowhere. Besides, she was young and beautiful; and no girl who is young and beautiful can resent flattery, even from an unwelcome source.

In her heart she detested Johnson Culberson; it was this detestation that had lessened her interest in his words, and had made her unsuspicious of the daring climax to which they would lead. Nevertheless, she had been bred a lady; though unused to violent love proposals, she was accustomed to gallantry, and had practised the reply courteous. She hesitated for a moment, while she strove to extract the sting from her answer.

"I am sorry, Mr. Culberson," she said not unkindly, "that I allowed you to say so much. I am sure you will realize that what you ask is unreasonable and impossible."

"Forgive me, Miss Innisdale, it can be neither," he

answered. "If for a minute you'll forget that I have been in the employ of your father, you can have nothing to which to object. If you doubt my parentage, I'll tell you in confidence——"

"Tell me nothing which does not and can never concern me," she answered hastily. "Already you have told me more than I cared to know. I tell you it is impossible."

"You are over hasty in deciding what may be your entire future, Miss Innisdale," said Culberson. "Think it over for a few days, and let me plead my cause again. Not many a colonial maiden would so unceremoniously cast aside a duchess' coronet."

She reddened, as from a slap in the face.

"True. And country girls who marry coronets seldom get real men with them. Enough, Culberson. This discussion is tiresome and unpleasant. It is in very bad form for you to continue it."

"I am sorry it must seem so, Miss Innisdale," Culberson answered. "Yet, if you would consider the interest of your father as well as your own, the matter might appear in another light. It may be that your selfish persistence will eventually decide the fate of the one you hold dearest, and of what he holds dearest."

"My father? What do you mean, Culberson? I detest enigmas."

"My proposition, Miss Innisdale," Culberson answered, "though prompted solely by my undying affection for you, would also place your father in a position where his words would carry greater weight, and make him immune from any such charge as may be attributed to lesser men. The voice which accuses the common rabble would not dare to mention the name of a duchess' father."

"To what charge would you refer, Culberson?" she asked. "I am not aware of any possible accusation from which my father desires to secure immunity."

"That may be so, Miss Innisdale," he replied, "yet innocent men have before now paid the supreme price for hasty or thoughtless words. The recent passage of the Treason Act in parliament jeopardizes the safety of every out-spoken colonist; and only those who have strong ties in the Upper House, where all cases of treason are eventually decided, may venture to express their opinions freely."

"Treason?" The storm in her bosom burst, and its lightning forked from her eyes. "What do you mean, Culberson, when you couple the name of my father with such a word?"

The man fidgeted nervously. In his mad desire to intimidate her into an acceptance of his proposal, he now realized that he had gone a step too far; that, frail and pliant as she seemed, she was not the woman to be cowed.

"It seems, Miss Innisdale," he said, "that you are bent upon misunderstanding my most innocent and kindly-intentioned remarks. Mightn't we drop the subject until you are in a more reasonable humor? I am sure you will then see that I am really considering only your own interest, and that my motives are pure and unselfish."

"I demand an explanation here and now," she answered firmly. "Any implication upon my father's honor must concern me first, and I shall accept no evasion nor equivocation. The stocks and the ducking-stool await malevolent calumniators."

His vicious, calculating eyes for a fleeting instant met hers, as she faced him with the gaze of the deified defied. Anger had but added a tinge of piquancy to her superb beauty,—an untouched rose, he felt, protected by a thousand thorns. A coronet might well have sat on that proud head, and acquired splendor from the contact: no crown in all England that matrimony had to give

could embellish *her*. He could not renounce the hope of success; duplicity yet might win.

"Miss Innisdale," he said in a feeble attempt at conciliation, "you are not at heart unjust, and, in spite of your unaccountable displeasure, I shall be plain with you. You know that the opposition to His Majesty's laws in Massachusetts and Virginia has led the home government to decide to seize the leaders, and try them in London on charges of treason and sedition. While no accusation has yet been made against your father, you know that he is the most out-spoken of the Virginian leaders, and I have heard you yourself disagree with some of his radical statements."

"The fact that I might disagree with some of my father's statements," she replied, "does not make those statements wrong, still less does it constitute them treason. My father is an Englishman, more loyal to his king, to his country and to himself than you can ever be. The arguments which he uses, whether or not they be palatable to the throne, are the very arguments which Rockingham, Burke, Chatham, and the best Englishmen are using, yet none dare accuse them of treason."

"That is the very point I have been trying to make, Miss Innisdale," Culberson answered hastily. "These men have power in the House of Lords, have influence among the aristocracy of England, and are, therefore, immune. I am asking you to put your father in the same position, thus giving him equal immunity, and his words greater weight. Besides, these men speak in the presence of their peers, and of the king himself; your father's utterances are liable to be incorrectly repeated, perverted and misinterpreted."

"My father, sir," she answered warmly, "expresses his sentiments in the presence of the Governor of Virginia, and of his peers of the Burgesses. If his words are to be perverted and misrepresented, it must be for selfish reasons by some slanderous and pusilanimous

eavesdropper like Johnson Culberson, and of such he has no fear."

Culberson rose from his seat.

"It would be useless to discuss the matter farther, Miss Innisdale," he said, "since you attribute to my well-meant efforts motives so unworthy. At some other time——"

"Wait, Culberson," she interrupted imperiously. "We must end this matter here and now."

She moved across to the door, and called down to Aunt 'Lizbeth.

"I is comin', ma honey," cooed the old housekeeper from the lower hall; "here I is."

"Send one of the boys to summon my father at once," Beatrice ordered, "and send Alec up to me."

In another minute, Uncle Alec, a gray-headed negro who was the house-keeper's husband, stood smiling at the door.

"Remain there, Alec," she ordered. "We are awaiting my father."

Culberson glanced cynically at the aged door-keeper.

"I assure you, Miss Innisdale," he said, "I have no intention to escape; but since you thought a guard necessary, you might at least have obtained one who could be of use. That old relic is only an ornament."

She did not answer. It was ten minutes before Colonel Innisdale, panting from his unaccustomed haste, ascended the stairs to his daughter's room.

"Father," said Betty in a voice which, though remarkably cool, was strained from ill-concealed emotion, "that man has insulted me with an offer of marriage, and when I refused——"

" 'Sdeath!" roared the colonel, a man just at heart, but ever hasty and hot-tempered, so that he was always reversing himself, "have you forgotten your position, Culberson? You are a servant here, sir; a servant: remember that."

"He intimated," Beatrice continued, "that unless you purchased his friendship and protection by offering in exchange the hand of your daughter, you are liable to a charge of treason."

"The devil he did," cried Innisdale. "The man who would impute treason to Matthew Innisdale must back up his words with his sword. Culberson, I demand an apology."

Culberson turned towards his employer with a graceful bow.

"I must regret, Colonel Innisdale," he answered, "that I have said nothing for which I can apologize. To ask your daughter's hand in honorable marriage is the privilege of any Englishman who is better born than herself. As for this talk of treason, I shall not belie the lady, but I consider myself as much at liberty to express my thoughts concerning you, as you are to express yours about your king. If this is not satisfactory, you will have no difficulty in finding me."

"Then by heaven——"

"Not so, father," said Beatrice, laying a restraining hand on her father's arm. "Culberson is entirely beneath your notice: the only chastisement to which he is entitled is that generally accorded your other servants." She turned majestically to the other. "Johnson Culberson, you are dismissed. Within an hour you will leave this plantation. If you are ever seen on it after that, I shall have my slaves horsewhip you from the grounds. You may go."

CHAPTER XVII.

A GIRL'S PROBLEMS.

Beatrice looked up with a tired smile as the laughing face of Fanny Morgan peered into the room.

Her interview with Culberson, sufficiently unpleasant in itself, had come upon the heels of other thoughts hardly less embarrassing, and left her unusually morose and broody.

For Culberson's charge against her father, she well knew there was ample excuse, even though the count of treason could not be sustained. She, too, had often expressed her disapproval of the radicalism with which her father, Colonel Henry, and a few of the more outspoken of their friends assailed the Crown. She knew that it was her father's wealth and influence which still kept the governor attached to him. She saw that Dunmore knew Innisdale would be of invaluable aid to whichever side he gave his support when the inevitable split came, and that the wily Scotsman was striving with might and main to win the colonel into supporting the Crown. Should Dunmore be convinced there was no chance of winning Innisdale, then the next best thing he could do to weaken his antagonists would be, by some means, to get the powerful colonel out of the way. And she reasoned that if Culberson was as big a figure as he pretended to be, which, however, she doubted, he would now probably lay his facts before the governor. Yet she also knew that any action Lord Dunmore might take against her father would be the signal for that revolt which the governor was, not without manifest skill, still keeping underground.

The proposal of Culberson was another matter. She

could hardly believe the man was in love with her. Was it her beauty that he wanted to buoy him into English society,—for she knew that she was beautiful,—or was it her father's wealth, to make him foremost in Virginia? His love-making was crude and insincere: she was inexperienced, but she could detect that much. And the man knew, as well as she did, that their spirits antagonized each other. Was it merely an excuse he sought for denouncing her father?

It was while she debated this question that the advent of her maid awakened her to other matters. She looked into the face of the girl, and saw happiness there; saw gratitude and love and pride in features that had never before expressed anything.

How much happier was their simple life! Here was no intrigue, no scheming, no baser motives. They just loved, that was all; there was nothing to gain except each other.

She smiled up encouragingly.

"Why, Fanny, you're back. I see you look happy."

"Yes, Miss Betty; and I *am* happy," the girl answered guilelessly. "It is the most wonderful day I have had since—oh, years and years."

"I am glad to hear it, Fanny. What made it such a wonderful day?"

"I don't know, Miss Betty. Perhaps it was because you were so kind to me. That started making the day happy for me, and it just kept on. Everybody was kind to me to-day. Walter and I had such a lovely time in the woods. Aunt 'Lizbeth gave us the best dinner she ever cooked; and Uncle Alec he just hung around with such jokes I nearly burst my sides a-laughing."

"You like Walter?"

"I certainly do, Miss Betty. He is one of the best men I ever met; and he loves flowers and trees and birds and running water just as I do. He promised to see me again if it is at all possible."

"To see you again, Fanny? Aren't you going to marry him?"

"No ma'am. He asked me to, but I soon got it out of his head, and now we're just going to be friends. That's so much nicer."

"How silly of you, Fanny," Beatrice exclaimed in surprise. "Why did you refuse him? You certainly can't expect to do better."

"I'm not trying to do better, Miss Betty," she answered. "I'm not going to marry."

"Silly girl." Beatrice uttered the words without reproof. It was the falsehood most often on her own lips,—though she didn't know it was false. "Do you love another?"

For a moment she was silent, and in that moment her entire manner changed. When she spoke, it was in a sober, unmodulated tone, barely audible.

"Yes, ma'am, I love another. But I shall not marry him either."

"Aha," laughed Beatrice, "so that's it. Come, tell me all about it, Fanny."

A large tear-drop glistened in the girl's eye. She sank on her knees beside the couch on which her mistress sat.

"Please, please, Miss Betty," she stammered, "you have been very kind to me, and I'd do most anything to show how grateful I am, but please don't ask me about that."

It was a queer picture they presented: Beatrice, lithe and graceful, robed in a magnificent house-dress of blue silk, hoopless, but lined with buckram, her long black hair, secured with a single silver comb, falling heavily on the couch beside her; the girl, muscular but not massive, crouched at her feet, her form clothed in her newest close-fitting, one-piece dress of striped gingham, her feet and arms bare, and her thick hair, as black and

nearly as long as that of her mistress, falling in two massive plaits over her shoulders.

"Ah, I know," cried Betty, with instinctive girlishness scenting a romance. "It was the person who gave you the book."

"He?" she queried deprecatingly. "Why should you think so, Miss Betty?"

"Because," answered Beatrice, "you refused to disclose his name to my father, and would have been punished in his place. You must have loved him, or you wouldn't have done that."

She laughed aloud mockingly,—this strange creature who could veer from tears to laughter at a single thought.

"Isn't it queer, Miss Betty," she said, "that you who can read books, and trees, and flowers, and even the stars, cannot read people? Yet I have read you well enough to know that, in the same position, you would have done exactly what I did."

"I don't know," Beatrice answered meditatively. "I should have to love some one very dearly indeed before I'd take thirty lashes which were due to him."

"You are unjust to yourself, Miss Betty. If you loved some one very dearly, you wouldn't mind being under an obligation to him; but if you disliked him, and wished to be rid of him, you certainly wouldn't want to owe him anything, should you?"

"Yes, that's right," Beatrice answered.

"Well," Fanny continued, "the person who gave me the book was one of your father's slaves. Ever since I came here, I have been sick of his love-making. When he gave me the volume, I believed that he had found it, as he told me, and I knew he had no use for it; he would have thrown it away, while to me it was invaluable, and I knew of no means by which I could obtain one.

"If I had allowed him to be punished for it, he would have been proud to suffer for what he did for me, and would have had a right to expect some yielding on my

part in atonement. I should have been under an obligation to him, which he would never forget. But when I accepted the punishment, he would have to admit that he brought me into trouble, and could not expect me to care for him after that. As a matter of fact, I have forbidden him ever to speak to me again, and I can see that that is a greater punishment than any lashes Master Culberson could have given."

"You reason queerly, Fanny, but you are probably right," Miss Innisdale admitted. "By the way, Culberson has left us."

"Left, ma'am? Why?"

"I dismissed him, Fanny. Perhaps it was for a reason similar to that you have just given me. You see, we are not so very different after all."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SURPRISED.

It was a glorious afternoon in the late summer. The sun was slanting over the western woodlands, and a gentle breeze rustled through the leafy boughs, scattering abroad the rich fragrance of jasmine, rose and lily.

Beatrice lounged easily on a vine-clad bench in the shade of a large hickory a hundred feet from the house. In her hand she held a tiny volume of Cowper's poems. It was a gift, recently received from her brother at Oxford, and she was eagerly devouring the beautiful lines.

Suddenly the sound of rapid hoof-beats attracted her attention. She glanced up from her book, and, at the farther end of the long lane that led up to the house, saw a rider approach at full gallop. In another instant her sharp eyes detected the free, swinging gait of *Quebec,* the gray mare that Eleanor had loved to ride, and then she distinguished the rider as Major Crawford himself. She hastened to the door to greet him,—ever a welcome visitor in a land where all were always welcome.

"Why, Major Crawford," she exclaimed, proffering her hand as the rider sprang from his saddle with the agility of a boy and relinquished his mount to Uncle Alec who led her away, "you ride like a knight-errant to his tryst. You haven't brought us bad news, I hope."

"If you were the other half of the tryst," answered Crawford with the gallantry of the age, gently raising the lady's hand to his lips, "no true knight ought to spare horse-flesh in his efforts to hasten it. I bring news, dear, but it is not bad news." He turned towards her father, who had hurried out at the sound of his

friend's voice. "His Excellency has summoned a special meeting of the Council for noon to-morrow, Innisdale, and has requested me to notify you. It's a long story, and, by George, I have not been so dry since that night back in 'fifty-nine when we clambered up the Heights of Abraham after Wolfe."

Colonel Innisdale took his friend by the arm and led him into the house. Fanny Morgan filled the ever-ready silver flagons with sparkling French wine, and it was not till the major had emptied his second that Innisdale reverted to the business on which he had been summoned.

"What is it this time?" he asked coolly. "Still the Boston trouble?"

"No," Crawford answered, "something nearer to us. It seems as if we are in for some trouble with the redskins, though, so far as I can find out, the Indians really have the better of the argument."

"But the Indians," Innisdale interrupted, "have been docile and friendly for several years."

"Just so," Crawford admitted. "The report, as it reached me, is not quite consistent, and is somewhat confusing. As nearly as I can make it out, however, it appears that some report reached Colonel Norton, the governor's lieutenant out in the west, that the Mingos were preparing for a rising of some sort. Norton promptly sent a warning to the settlers in that neighborhood. Whether or not the message was correctly delivered is uncertain, but, upon its receipt, a company of these westerners banded themselves together, attacked a tribe of friendly Iroquois, and perpetrated upon them, —men, women and children,—outrages which must forever disgrace the name of England to these people. The Indians have, quite naturally, risen in retaliation; the various tribes are combining; frontier settlements have already been burnt, and their inhabitants

slaughtered: unless something is done at once, no one knows what will happen.''

Innisdale remained silent, as if in deep thought.

''Crawford,'' he said at length, ''we know each other. Together we have fought the French and the Indians, together we climbed the great western mountains; we may be plain with each other. The trouble in Massachusetts has assumed alarming proportions, and the sister colonies, but especially Virginia, are in thorough sympathy. There is even a fear in some quarters that the colonies might eventually combine in open defiance of the imperial government. What effect would an Indian War have upon such a project?''

Crawford did not answer the question.

''I had the same thought at the outset,'' he said. ''Lord Dunmore is whole-heartedly loyal to his king. He is far-seeing, and a tactician. Nevertheless, he is a man of honor, and an Englishman. It is hard to conceive of such a man descending to so contemptible a ruse with such an end in view.''

''The governor may be innocent of any such intention,'' Innisdale conceded, ''though many kings have preserved their crowns at greater cost than the lives of a few unoffending red-skins. But even so, there are fawners and flunkeys around his lordship whose interests might be equally served by any such conflict. Colonel Norton's message might easily have been changed by any insignificant underling with just such a motive.''

''True,'' Crawford admitted. ''That is quite possible, and the Council must sift the thing to the bottom. At least, we must make to the Indians what amends are possible; we cannot estrange them at this time. But who do you think headed the band that made the attack on them?''

''I give it up,'' Innisdale answered. ''All our pioneer Indian fighters are men of caution and sense. Some fool, evidently.''

"Fool is right," snapped Crawford. "It was no other than our old friend Johnson Culberson."

"Culberson?" gasped the colonel. "Ye gods; how did he get mixed up in this? I thought he was returning to England to claim some heritage which was his."

"All bosh, Innisdale," Crawford replied. "I do not believe he can again set foot in England; and certainly he is no gentleman."

"Well," said Innisdale, "there is no time to lose: with Culberson on the job, there is sure to be a lot of mischief done. The Council must act at once and firmly. You will excuse me while I make some preparations for the journey. We start for Williamsburg immediately after supper. There is a bright moon, and the ride will be cooler than by day, so we can make better time."

While the colonel busied himself arranging for his departure, Beatrice entertained the visitor, refilling his flagon, amusing him with chatter and gossip, and, at his request, adding a song, which she herself accompanied on the harp.

Then came the call for supper and shortly after, the two members of the Governor's Council departed on the long ride to Williamsburg.

Next day, Beatrice, accompanied by the faithful Fanny Morgan, went for one of her long rambles in the woods. The girl was passionately fond of nature and solitude, and the pair covered several miles, through hedges and thickets and brush, over rocks and moss and grassland, along river-banks, and skirting marshes.

Some time after noon they arrived at a large oak tree in a dense forest. It was a favorite resort of the girl's, and, though less than two miles from the residence, the woods had, at her request, been kept in almost its virgin state. Birds and squirrels hopped about the trees; a small stream gurgled in the rear, trickling over a tiny cataract with a rhythmic soporific cadence: through an

opening in the boughs, the river glinted back the sunlight three hundred yards away.

Beatrice sank on an improvised couch at the foot of the tree.

"Fanny," she said, "I am going to finish my Cowper. Go to the house, and see if the boy who went to Williamsburg has returned. If there are any letters, bring them here to me."

The girl darted off, scaring a rabbit in her path. Frequently she had sat with her mistress in this same retreat; frequently she had left her there on various errands to the house. She thought little of the matter, except to hurry along.

Beatrice opened the book. She read page after page of absorbing verse. She lost all sense of time, of place, of being; swept away on the wings of fancy by the poet's magic pen. No sound disturbed, no fear assailed her. The romance of poetry had won her heart.

A noiseless hand fell on her arm. She looked up, strangely unafraid, as if it were some vision conjured up out of the poet's mysterious imagery. Suddenly her senses woke. Two Indians stood beside her, their faces ogrishly smeared with paint. In their hands were rifles, and evil-looking knives. They seized her roughly, as two other Indians emerged from the thicket.

"Who are you?" she demanded, "and what do you want?"

"Hush; not a sound," commanded one of the Indians in the broken guttural that served for communication with the pale-face. "We knew you came here often, and for two days we watched for you. Your man has taken our women, and has killed them, or ill-treated them. We take you to our people that they may have their revenge."

"My friend," Beatrice answered, "you are mistaken. My father has never injured one of your people, and is your best friend."

The Indian did not reply. With a sharp jerk, he

brought her hands together. She uttered a single piercing cry for help: a firm hand covered her mouth, and held her rigid. She fought and tore and struggled: she was helpless as a babe in a strong man's arms. They bound her arms and legs with leather thongs, they gagged her that she could not speak, then stretched her, panting and breathless, upon the grass.

"You are his squaw," said one of the men. "I have often seen you together. You shall go with me, and shall fill the place of my Flower-that-blooms-every-morning, whom he tore from my bosom and crushed to earth, trampling the spirit from her eyes."

She was powerless to call for help, to deny the charge, to tell them that she did not even understand what they were talking about. Two of the men lifted her, and moved off through the forest at a rapid pace. One went before as guide, while the fourth guarded the rear, carefully covering the trail as they went.

They avoided the river and made for the Pennsylvania mountains, wisely inferring that when the pursuit started it would follow the course of the stream. The weight of the girl was insignificant to husky warriors trained to flight and endurance; and when the first halt was called, they had covered some twenty miles of wild Virginian forests.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOGGED PURSUIT.

Fanny Morgan reached the house. The messenger from Williamsburg had brought a letter for Miss Innisdale. The girl took it, and started on her return, tripping as light-heartedly as she had come.

She was almost in the shade of the oak tree beneath which she had left her mistress, when the sound of voices arrested her,—low, strange voices in an unknown language.

Cautiously she drew nearer, and peered through the branches. Four Indians, clad in skins and feathers, with war paint on their faces and guns in their hands, stood before her. Even as she looked about for her mistress, hoping she had found safety in timely flight, two of the men lifted from the ground a limp figure, bound and helpless. A sudden impulse urged her to rush forward and save her mistress or die beside her; her natural caution told her the sacrifice would be useless,—that alone she could not overpower four armed savages.

The party moved off. She noted the direction, then turned and fled,—fled like the wild antelope in the jungles of her homeland when the panther was at its heels. Something told her it was cowardly to be leaving her mistress in this her hour of sharpest need; and the savage breast hates nothing more than cowardice. Yet it was in the interest of her mistress that she went: at Innismount help lay, whose succor would be sure. Even though the master was away, she knew that in half-an-hour a strong posse would be in pursuit. If the wary Indians did not elude them;—that was the point. She had heard a lot about the Indians; she knew that

they were adepts at covering their tracks, and she knew that every second lost on a blind trail added to Miss Betty's danger.

A single breathless burst of speed took her over a third of the distance. A figure moved before her,—a stealthy figure that evaded the open, and crept behind the bushes at her approach. She hailed him imperatively.

At her third call, the figure emerged from its hiding-place. She recognized him as one of the master's slaves; a recent purchase, and somewhat of an incorrigible.

"Aw wha' you hollerin' s'much 'bout, you Fanny Morgan?" he answered gruffly. "Ah ain't deef."

The girl disregarded the man's surliness.

"Listen, Pompey," she said. "Fly to the house,—fly for all you're worth,—and tell them that Indians have taken Miss Betty and carried her off. There are four men, armed with guns and long knives. They seized her under the big oak tree in the White Owl Glade, and made off into the woods to the right. I am going to follow them, and leave a track which the rescuers cannot miss. Run for your life, Pompey. The safety of the mistress depends wholly on you. Make good, and your service will not be forgotten."

"Sho' Ah is gwine run lak de debble arter me," Pompey growled, and plunged down into the open at a pace which gratified the girl. She turned once more in the direction of her unfortunate mistress; and now she had new vigor, born from the certainty that in a couple of hours at most the Indians should be overtaken and her beloved mistress saved.

She reached the spot of the seizure; her sharp eye picked up the trail so carefully hidden by the captors, and she plunged into the denser forest. She moved with greater caution now, but hardly less swiftly. Here and there she plucked a small branch from a tree and tossed it in the path, to convince her rescuers that they were on the right track.

In half-an-hour she saw the party three hundred yards ahead. They covered the more open spaces at a level, lolling trot; through the denser woods they moved at a brisk walk. She maintained the distance, drawing nearer in the deeper forests, falling back again as the woods thinned.

The rear-guard must have sensed a presence. He stopped, peered into the forest around, and retraced his steps a hundred yards, his gun levelled, his eyes and ears alert. Fifty yards farther Fanny Morgan stood. Not a limb moved; not a muscle quivered: she almost ceased to breathe. A single movement must have betrayed her presence; yet into her blood and nerves and muscles had been born an instinct as primitive, as resolute and as true as that of the red man.

The Indian turned again after his companions; the girl breathed once more,—and followed. The adventure had taught her to be more careful; she was soon to learn that it was but the usual manifestation of Indian cautiousness.

Her steps were as soundless as the Indians', her eyes and ears as keen, her purpose a thousand times more resolute. Long before this she had expected the rescuers to be upon them, but still she looked and listened in vain. No sound had come from Beatrice, but the girl could see that she was alive, and probably unhurt. What her abductors proposed to do with her, Fanny could not even vaguely guess, but she made up her mind that at the first sign of any attack upon her mistress, she would spring to her aid, and die fighting beside her. Over and over she told herself that she would never return to Innismount with word of Miss Betty's fate; that wherever Beatrice Innisdale died, or suffered, there Fanny Morgan should assuredly die.

The sun reddened over the western hills. The shade of the trees lengthened and lengthened, and then lost shape. The shadows mingled into one all-enveloping

gloom. A screech owl vented a querulous demand; a mountain wolf howled back an insolent denial. A round, white moon crawled out of the eastern fringe of forest blackness; a scraggy, dark-gray cloud woke up in the dim north-west, scurried across to her, flirted with her for a moment, then took her all to himself. A blinding flash parted the black heavens, the hills rattled and the pine-trees trembled.

And still no rescuers came. Could they have lost the trail? That was the only possibility; though she had made it as plain as she dared. She looked up at the blackened sky, and shivered. It was going to rain, probably heavily; and the rain would obliterate the tracks she had left. She grew more daring, marking her course in a manner she hoped would out-live any storm.

The Indians changed their course, making for the hills at a more rapid pace. She guessed the reason: their forest-trained instinct foretold the storm; they would seek shelter. She followed closer, fearing to lose them in the darkness and stumble upon them when they halted.

The rain came down,—large pelting drops like hail-stones. The Indians reached a large overhanging cliff, and deposited their burden in its shelter. They squatted beside it, out of the storm, their sharp eyes fixed upon the dark fringe that approached their retreat, their guns pointed outwards.

Slowly she crept through the thicket till she was within fifty feet of them. Still she could not distinguish their forms, except in the frequent flashes of lightning. But it was not safe to go nearer. She crouched there, sure that they could not evade her.

The rain drove down upon her in fierce torrents. There was no shelter from which she could watch the cave, and she would not have gone out of sight of it to save her life. She shook the water from her face, drew her clinging rags closer around her, and prepared for a tireless vigil.

They had probably covered twenty miles. She had counted on a posse from Innismount overtaking them in six. She knew that her master was away at Williamsburg, also Major Crawford, their nearest neighbor, whose home was only ten miles from the Colonel's. But there were scores of white men on the plantation, and more than two hundred negroes, almost any one of whom would have given his life for Miss Betty. Wilson, the new overseer, or Rockwell, the blacksmith, or any one of a dozen others, could readily organize a rescue party in the master's absence.

She had seen Pompey hasten away towards Innismount; he could have taken but a few minutes to get there. She wondered to whom he had delivered her message. Probably to Aunt 'Lizbeth; and the dear old mammy would not have lost a minute to hurry on the rescuers. No, there was but one explanation: in some unaccountable manner they had missed her track. The storm would make it still harder for them to recover it, yet, that they would she felt sure. It was for her to make their task easier.

The storm at length abated. A swift wind came up from the north-west, shaking the heavy drops from the branches, and sending the last lingering clouds hurrying eastwards. The moon beamed forth again, sloping towards the west. Midnight was past. She strained her ears for some sound of her pursuers, but her eyes were on the little group huddled beneath the cliff. She could see them plainly now, though her mistress was hidden from view.

She expected them to move at any minute, and kept herself prepared for any emergency. Still they waited. Two men guarded the front, the others, shadowy in the background, were probably asleep. She felt cramped and restless, but she feared to stir. So the long vigil continued.

The Indians shook their companions, and pointed to

the eastern sky, slowly reddening. They once more lifted their burden, and moved off in single file.

Their egress led within a dozen feet of her. She crouched lower into the bushes, and held her breath. A struggling moonbeam gave her a fleeting glance of her mistress' face, pallid but resolute. The gag had been removed, but her hands and feet were still bound. She wished she could give her a single word of cheer; a single signal that her plight was known, and that her friends were close behind. But she desisted, for she knew that any indiscretion now might mean the lives of both. Once more she silently dogged their steps.

The day dawned slowly. A round, yellow sun topped the green eastern forest. She dropped farther behind, except in the densest woods, leaving foot-prints no rescuer could miss.

Their course sloped slowly downwards now. They crossed a narrow, rocky stream, and kept near its northern bank. She paused and swallowed a few hasty gulps of the sparkling water, then darted after them.

Shortly after noon, the company rested on the bank of a broad river, near where it was joined by the stream they had followed. They lay on the grass, still keeping a sharp look-out, and passed some food around. She remembered that she had not eaten for more than twenty-four hours. She plucked a handful of ripe, juicy blackberries from a bush beside her, and crunched them slowly in her mouth.

Rested, the men arose. From some concealment that she had not sensed, they pulled forth a boat. Miss Innisdale was lifted into it, her captors followed, two of the men seized the oars, and the tiny craft, frail and apparently overloaded, glided out into the stream.

Fanny Morgan watched with bulging eyes. Her lips trembled, and her breath hissed. Then she clasped her hands, glanced up at the unclouded sun, and a single unintelligible moan burst from her heart.

CHAPTER XX.

LOST.

Pompey had never been reconciled to servitude. Perhaps this was his misfortune rather than his fault. During the ten years since he had been separated from his dear African wilds, he had served a dozen different masters. His massive, stocky frame, his tough, faultless muscles and his rugged, robust constitution readily obtained him a purchaser whenever he was placed on the market; while his reckless incorrigibility, his stolid indifference to punishment, and his stubborn mulishness under all circumstances, always made his latest master eager to place him on the market at the first opportunity.

Naturally, Pompey and the whipping-post were old and frequent associates, and, naturally, too, he was always kept under the strictest surveillance. On the plantation of Colonel Innisdale, the negro, for the first time, found himself treated with an amount of leniency almost to laxity; for the colonel treated his slaves humanely in his own interest as well as in theirs. And Pompey resolved that this laxity should be to his advantage.

Wilson, who had succeeded Culberson as overseer, sent the negro from one of the fields to another soon after lunch. Pompey knew that for at least two hours his movements would be free from supervision, and he promised himself that those two hours should put fifteen good miles between him and the plantation. He was not unaware of the severe penalties provided for run-away slaves, but he also knew that a few days' rapid travel northwards would assure him safety, protection, and means of concealment. He decided that the risk was worth taking.

Pompey had covered but a short distance of his proposed flight, when he saw Fanny Morgan apparently in hot pursuit. He crept into the bushes, in an attempt to evade his captor. The girl's calls, however, made him apprehensive of a new turn to the affair: others might hear her shouts and join her, making his position still more dangerous. He reappeared from his concealment, determined to silence her for ever.

Fanny Morgan gave her message breathlessly, unsuspicious of the man's real purpose. He heard, and his heart laughed in glee, though his surly visage masked his delight. Freedom had at last come to Pompey. The search for the young mistress would draw all attention from him, and the longer that quest lasted, the better chance he had.

He darted off rapidly, in seeming obedience to her command, but, no sooner than he was beyond her view, he once more changed his course, making for the north, —and freedom.

It was nearly four hours later before Pompey was missed. The colonel was away, Miss Innisdale had not yet returned from her rambles, and Wilson, aware of his responsibility, hurried every available man to scour the woods in search of the fugitive. Late into the night the searchers dropped in one by one, each reporting failure. Pompey had escaped.

Meanwhile, Aunt 'Lizbeth was getting anxious that Miss Betty and Fanny Morgan had not returned. Her uneasiness grew as the night continued. She could find no explanation, no precedent for their strange non-appearance. The girls often went for long walks, and were sometimes late, but never to such an extent. Alec advanced the possibility that Miss Betty might have walked in the direction of Miss Crawford's home, and, finding herself nearer to it than to her own, continued there, to return on horse-back later. This explanation,

unsatisfactory to both, nevertheless kept up their hearts as they sat listening into the night for hoof-beats.

Then the rain came on,—a steady downpour, though nothing to compare with the thunder-storm in the hills. That convinced them that if Miss Innisdale had not yet left her friend's home, she would probably spend the night there, and either return or send a messenger early in the morning. So they slept, warm though uneasy, in the old home, while their mistress lay bound in a mountain cavern and Fanny Morgan crouched beneath the dripping pines.

Next morning a bearer was dispatched to Major Crawford's place. In a little more than an hour he returned. Beside him rode Eleanor, florid, and panting, prepared to direct the search for her friend.

Soon everything but the search for Miss Betty was forgotten on the entire plantation. Three hundred slaves, and a hundred white men and women, led by Miss Crawford and Aunt 'Lizbeth, roamed the woods, the swamps, the river-banks. How both mistress and maid could so completely have disappeared was beyond conjecture. Could some treacherous bog have swallowed them up? Could some tragedy of the river have taken them both to the bottom? Could they have met with some unaccountable accident in the forest?

Before noon, the searchers realized the hopelessness of their task. The night's rain had washed away whatever trace of their movements there might have been. A rider was hurriedly dispatched to Williamsburg for the master.

In the early hours of the following morning Colonel Innisdale galloped into the yard. He was accompanied by Major Crawford and a score of their friends, wealthy planters from the country through which they passed. The colonel and his party had from the first surmised the truth, for they knew that the Indians were on the war-path, and that no form of revenge was beyond them.

And as Culberson had not been unknown to them, it was quite natural that they should carry their vengeance to the people among whom he had been seen by many of their tribe.

Yet even the colonel was out-witted by the wily redskins. The natural road to the Indian country led up the river which the kidnappers had so laboriously avoided. While four boat-loads of armed men rowed feverishly up this stream, Beatrice Innisdale, with three days' start, was being hurried by her captors up another unfrequented river that zig-zagged on the farther side of the blue hills which circumscribed their horizon.

CHAPTER XXI.

THROUGH THE HILLS.

The river upon which the Indians launched their boat wound a tortuous course up a narrow glen, densely wooded, but not impassably rocky. For a moment Fanny Morgan gazed on, helpless at this new turn of events.

In another minute she had made up her mind. She could not desert her mistress even now. There must be some way to keep the boat in sight. The rescuers could not be far behind; she must be able to point them the way.

She plunged madly forward through the thickets that fringed the river. The few strips of clothing that still clung to her were almost wholly carried away; her body, face and limbs were cut and bleeding by thorns and jagged rocks. She gave them hardly a thought. Her eyes were fixed on the tiny boat that slowly but steadily widened the distance between them; her mind was filled with the absorbing problem how much longer she could continue the reckless chase.

A tributary stream crossed her path. She plunged in boldly, and swam to the other side. The water seemed to refresh her: she darted into the woods with renewed vigor.

The windings of the river gave her some aid: she was soon able to cut off several sharp curves which the boat was compelled to make. The storm of the preceding evening helped her more: the river was still somewhat swollen, and the rowers made poor progress against the tide.

From every bit of rising ground she cast a wistful glance behind, but no sign of pursuers rewarded her. Again and again she assured herself that they were close

behind her now, that she would not have to keep up her pursuit much longer; then she rushed forward with hope reborn.

If human beings knew their future, how many would keep up the one-sided struggle that ends with the grave? If Fanny Morgan had known that the help she expected was far away, and going in an opposite direction,—that it would never, never reach her nor her mistress,—how long could she have battled against the almost insurmountable odds that confronted her?

The sun sank behind the western hills. She hurried nearer to the boat, lest she should lose it in the darkness. She knew that there was little fear of her being discovered, even by daylight, so long as the men remained in the boat. She wondered that she was able to follow them so successfully.

There was a bright moon, and the night was cooler than the day. She found the going easier,—for she had ceased remembering thorns and wounds. Besides, she soon noticed that in the denser woods the undergrowth was generally sparse. Sometimes it was possible to follow at the water's edge; sometimes she cut through the woods, emerging on the farther side of a curve ahead of the boat. At other times the curves went against her, but she hastened around, and soon regained what she had lost.

At length the boat stopped beside a high, rocky bank. The men sprang out, lifted out Miss Innisdale, and pulled up the craft. They squatted in the shelter of a high rock, and Fanny Morgan sank to the ground a short distance away, glad for the respite.

Apparently, as on the previous night, two of the men went immediately to sleep, while the other two remained on guard. She felt tired and sleepy, but she dared not venture to close her eyes, for she could not guess how long they might remain, and she would not take a chance on their escaping her.

She was hungry, too, she remembered. For nearly two days she had not eaten, save for a handful of berries. She had passed through several other clumps of berries, and had seen plenty of nuts, but she did not think of hunger at the time. She consoled herself that to-morrow she could secure an ample supply,—if help did not reach her before.

All night she sat there watching, tired but untiring. With early dawn the Indians arose, re-entered their boat, and were off. Once more she followed, footsore and hardly refreshed, but never desponding.

It was another day like that preceding. The country grew more rocky and the river more crooked as she journeyed westward, but by tearing her way through thickets, clambering over ledges, fording or swimming streams, and by exertions of which she never thought herself capable, she all day kept the boat in sight. From time to time she gathered a handful of nuts or berries, and cracked or crunched them as she hastened along.

The party once more rested for the night, and again she sank to earth almost worn out. Fairly certain that they would remain till early morning, as they had done on the two former nights, she snatched a brief repose in the early hours of the halt; but it was in short, fitful naps, half-awake, with senses alert. When the moon showed her that the night was more than half gone, she abandoned even this, preparing for the start.

The fourth and fifth days brought no change,—and no rescuers. The country was steadily getting wilder. Jutting cliffs and massive boulders rose everywhere, while the narrowing river rumbled along a crooked, rock-strewn gorge that made rowing almost as slow as walking.

They passed in the distance a tiny hamlet that looked like an Indian settlement, but the red-skins had not paused. She began to feel that their destination could not be much farther.

The sixth day broke with a strong north wind, and a light, cold drizzle. Her almost unclad figure shivered in the gusts, and she tried to avoid the more exposed cliffs. Her strength was all but gone, her hope was ebbing fast, but her resolute courage was as strong as when she started. She would follow Miss Betty to the end of the world, and die fighting beside her.

There was a sudden excitement on board the boat. It seemed to her that the wind had dashed it against a jutting rock, and stove a hole in its side. The men were rowing feverishly towards the bank, and she could see that the boat was slowly sinking. They reached the land, and dragged the white woman ashore, then pulled up the sinking craft after them. They squatted around it, and carefully examined the damage. Apparently it was beyond repair. They turned away, and spoke together eagerly for several minutes.

Two of the men moved off through the woods in the direction from which they had come. She guessed they were gone to seek aid,—probably another boat in the village near which they had passed on the preceding evening; for in the present state of the country, it would be almost impossible to carry their prisoner by any other means.

The other two Indians remained to guard the captive, who lay on the ground ten feet beyond them in the shelter of a large rock. At first they spoke eagerly together, but soon their conversation flagged, then died away. They stood some twenty feet apart, on either side of their charge. Their gaze was on the river, the one up, the other down. Their hands were resting on their guns, but their thoughts were far away. So, for ten minutes, they stood, immovable as wooden sentinels, sure that their task was unnecessary.

Fanny Morgan had crept within a hundred feet of the nearest. She picked up a smooth white stone, roughly cylindrical, nearly a foot long and perhaps two inches

in diameter. She clutched it in her hand, and glided silently forward from boulder to boulder, agile as a lizard, noiseless as an eel.

"The sleeping Indian," says the proverb, "hears the dead leaf fall." These Indians were wide awake. It was broad daylight, though the drizzle had increased, and the wind was whistling through the trees in deafening gusts. Dared she hope to catch them napping?

Yet she was the daughter of a race whose fathers had hunted the lion and the antelope with naked clubs,—and come upon them unawares! Was it too much to hope that into her blood and muscles had been born a step as soundless as the Indian's, a heart as resolute, a nerve as true?

She could not hear her own foot-falls; she listened for her heart, and could not hear it beat: there was not enough of her clothing left to rustle, or to impede the free movement of her limbs. Inch by inch she crept along.

She reached the boulder by which the Indian stood. His immobile eyes still rested on the river; his paint-smeared face did not betray his dreams.

Six feet behind him Fanny Morgan came. Her breath was hushed: her bosom neither rose nor fell. There was no sign of movement about her, save only that she moved.

She did not pounce at him. Confident of her own stealth, of her absolute absence of sound, she crept nearer still.

Then, like a flash of light, her arm went, and the heavy cudgel crashed into the Indian's head.

She did not wait for him to drop. Seconds were priceless centuries now. Almost with the fall of her club, she grasped the gun from his hand, turned it in the direction of the other, and pulled the trigger.

Fanny Morgan knew little of fire-arms. Years ago, in that long-forgotten past, she had been taught to shoot. Since then, she had aimed a gun in sport, but had never

fired one. Yet luck was with her. The weapon went off with a roar that shook the hills, and the other Indian toppled across a rock.

Beatrice sprang up at the sudden report. The sight of Fanny Morgan seemed but an apparition out of her troubled dreams. Before she could voice a question, the girl sprang beside her, and seized her arm.

"Come, Miss Betty," she cried. "We must run for it. The others will hear the report and follow. We must evade them."

"Who is with you?" gasped Beatrice. "Where is my father?"

"Follow me," she answered with a confidence she could hardly feel; "I shall take you to him."

She darted towards the river; and Beatrice, weak and wasted by six days of torture, sprang after her. She turned her course up the stream, keeping in the water whenever possible. Beatrice followed swiftly, making a desperate call upon that untried store of vitality which training, youth and heredity had kept in reserve.

Run for it? With three hundred miles of Indian-infested wilderness between her and safety?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RETURN.

"Can you keep it up, my mistress?" Fanny Morgan asked in a brief pause as the pair clambered over a rock.

"I am keeping up, Fanny," Miss Innisdale answered, "though I don't know how much longer I can. But tell me how you came here, and why you are alone."

"In a minute, Miss Betty. Let's get a little farther from them before we stop. If the other two Indians heard the gun, they will return and make a determined search for us. I am hoping they will either proceed down the river, knowing we ought to go that way, or else pick up the trail by which I came. That's why I keep going away from home."

They struggled on in silence for a while longer. Then, feeling that they had baffled pursuit, they turned north, and walked perhaps a mile into the forest. They reached a thickly wooded hill that provided a fair view of the approaches, and sank down under the trees.

"We ought to be safe here," said the girl. "It is a long way to go, and we must save ourselves all we can."

"Surely you are not alone, Fanny," Beatrice persisted. "Where are the others?"

"I don't know, ma'am. They must have lost the trail, though, goodness knows, I made it as plain as I dared."

"But how did you find it?" Beatrice demanded.

"I followed you all the way, Miss Betty."

"Followed me? Mercy, child, I was brought here in a boat."

"I know," the girl answered. "I ran through the woods, and kept the boat in sight all the time. I was

just returning to the White Owl Glade when I saw the men moving off with you. I found one of the negroes in the woods, and sent him to Innismount with a message that you had been taken. Then I followed you, to mark a trail which I hoped they could not miss. It is likely they are on my tracks, and near behind, but we cannot venture to return that way, for the Indians are sure to find and follow it.''

Beatrice knew the girl too well to express commendation of her devotion.

''I am glad you were able to follow me,'' she said. ''It means that we shall be able to return on foot as you came. How long is it since I was taken?''

''Six days, ma'am. But the return will be longer, for we must keep well away from the river, and we could not maintain the speed I was forced to make.''

''True, Fanny,'' Miss Innisdale admitted. ''Yet we have both been considered good walkers. We shall do our best, though you must be nearly worn out.''

''I'll keep up with you, Miss Betty,'' Fanny assured her. ''But you are thin and pale. Did you have anything to eat?''

''I tasted some of their dried meat and corn bread once or twice, I believe,'' Betty replied. ''But I feel fresh and strong, now that I have seen you.''

''I had lots of nuts and berries,'' said Fanny. ''We'll be able to gather them as we go. But why did they want to take you away, Miss Betty?''

''I don't know, dear. One of them said something about revenge for what our people did to their women, but all the time they spoke in their own language, so that I couldn't tell what they were saying. It must be some private raid. The Indians have been friendly with us for years.''

''Major Crawford was telling your father,'' said Fanny, ''that they had risen in the northwest.''

"So father told me. That's why the council was summoned."

"The rising," Fanny continued, "was caused by the cruelty of Master Culberson and a company of men he led."

"Culberson? Are you sure, Fanny? My father did not mention him."

"That's what Major Crawford said, ma'am," Fanny replied. "I was in there pouring their wine all the time."

"Culberson, eh? That would explain it, Fanny. One of the Indians looked like someone I had seen before. It is possible that he had been about Innismount, had seen Culberson there, and had associated him with us. But I am completely rested; can't we start now?"

"Yes, ma'am. We must keep to the hills, yet within view of the river, so as to get our direction from it; though I suppose if we keep in that general direction long enough,"—she pointed vaguely to the southeast,—"we shall at length reach some part of Virginia."

They once more started on the long march that should take them back to home and friends. With the contagious optimism of youth, Beatrice, now that she was freed from her copper-hued abductors, regarded the adventure as a girlish lark. They moved as swiftly as the forest permitted, with the subdued chatter and occasional laughter of their accustomed walks.

They kept a sharp lookout, but there was no sign of pursuit. A long, narrow valley on their right marked the course of the river. This they steadily avoided, often changing their course to keep farther from the region in which they expected the redskins to search.

Shortly after noon they rested for lunch. The forest afforded a profusion of berries; nuts were plentiful, and water in abundance. They both ate heartily, then once more started off.

The way was wild and rocky. Gaping chasms and in-

accessible cliffs barred their path, causing long detours, and, often a loss of direction, till a glimpse of the long, distant hollow where the river flowed once more assured them. Thorns and brambles impeded their course, and their progress was painfully slow, even though they hurried as fast as they dared. But they kept up their courage, and cheered each other along.

Night came early in the hills. They found shelter in a protected gorge, and threw themselves on the ground. They ate another meal of what the woods afforded, hastily gathered as they walked, and their chatter was light-hearted and commonplace.

Fortunately, ladies of the period were more profusely dressed than necessity demanded. From her own supply, Beatrice was able to replace the scanty raiment of her maid, destroyed in her hasty rush through the woods. Then, in that true democracy which only peril breeds, the two girls huddled closely together, and, worn out by the exertions of a week, slept soundly through the night.

It was early morning when they awoke. A spring that bubbled near supplied a refreshing drink and the means of an imperfect toilet. With deft fingers, aided by a small piece of stick, Fanny Morgan untangled Betty's mass of matted hair, restoring it to a semblance of order; then performed the same service to her own. Once more they resumed the homeward march, invigorated by their first night of complete rest, resolved to breakfast as they journeyed, whenever the forest provided the means.

They felt that the redskins would widen their search as their quest proceeded, and they steadily kept farther from the river. It was laborious climbing at first, but before noon they reached a comparatively level tract, apparently on the top of the mountain. Along this the going was easier, and they made better progress. There

was nowhere any sign of humanity, and they felt confident that they had evaded their pursuers.

They spent their second night out under the shelter of the trees, and once more slept comfortably. They woke in the early dawn, and again took up their course. They were moving swiftly now, and sure of reaching some part of inhabited Virginia within a few days. They had lost sight of the river-course from the preceding morning, but felt fairly certain of their general direction.

The morning brightened, the sky assumed a yellow tint, and then the sun, a dazzling mass of burning gold, edged over the distant forest—on their right!

Fanny Morgan gazed around the horizon in astonishment.

"Why, we're lost," she exclaimed. "We are going the wrong way."

"The wrong way? How?" Beatrice turned enquiringly.

"That is the east, where the sun comes from," the girl answered. "Therefore, we are going to the north. Virginia lies to the southeast."

"The southeast? Are you sure, Fanny?"

"Yes, ma'am. I followed you all the way on foot, and noted the direction as we came. The Indians travelled towards the northwest, except on the first day, when they went almost due north."

"Then we must turn back," Beatrice answered calmly. "I wonder how long we have been going in this direction?"

"I am fairly certain that up to last night we were right," Fanny replied. "Probably we started wrong this morning."

"If so," answered Miss Innisdale, "we have lost less than three hours. Yet we are on the very edge of the mountain. We have to go down this side, which is steep and rugged. It will be very slow."

They turned to face the sun, leaving it half-way on

their left. The mountainside was rougher than any they had encountered in the past two days. They picked their way slowly along, clambering over rocks, skirting chasms, sliding down steep inclines, making long detours where their way was impenetrably barred. They proceeded in single file, sometimes Fanny and sometimes her mistress leading the way as either discovered an opening that promised better progress.

They were half-way down the rocky hillside when Beatrice pointed to a narrow river that flowed along a gorge across their path.

"That is not the river up which you came," said Fanny. "It probably joins it lower down. I crossed several such streams in coming. But if we could reach it, we might find its course easier to follow."

"We'll try," said Beatrice, and led the way.

The stream was banked by giant cliffs, through which it seemed to cleave its way. For more than an hour the girls crept along the rocks, searching vainly for an opening through which they might descend to the narrow strip of beach at the water's edge.

At length they found it,—a narrow, precipitous gully, clogged with boulders and enough debris to show that in the rainy seasons it carried a torrent to the stream below. It was dry now, and a sure-footed mountain goat might have found footing down its course.

Ahead, the sheer cliffs rose impassable; up the dry watercourse, only a bird could fly. Either they must descend the gully, or else retrace their steps, undoing nearly two hours' hazardous progress.

"We must go down," said Beatrice. "There is no other way. To retrace our steps were hardly less dangerous."

"It is very steep, Miss Betty," Fanny answered, "but we can make it if we are careful. Better let me go before."

"What difference would it make?" Beatrice asked.

"If one must fall, better both. Your life is as valuable to me as mine; I could not get out of this without you. Come, and be careful."

Slowly they crept down the dry ravine, clinging to roots and boulders and whatever came in their way. Sometimes, stretched at full length over some ledge, they would hang on with their hands while their feet felt for a resting-place below. At times, unable to find even this, they would once more drag themselves up, carefully measure the distance beneath, hang over again, and drop into some niche in the rocks. So, slowly, the perilous descent was made.

Fanny Morgan had distinctly the advantage, her unshod toes holding into the crevices with the facility of a monkey's. Yet the white woman as truly vindicated the daring of her race.

They were but a dozen feet from the bottom. Beatrice hung over a ledge, felt for a landing-place with her feet, and dropped to it. The stone on which she sank, probably loosened by the recent rains, toppled over. She caught at a sappling; it came uprooted in her hand. Enveloped in a cloud of dust, both the rock and Miss Innisdale crashed to the bottom of the water-course.

Their fall loosened the other rocks, and removed what other ledges there might have been. Perched on the cliff twelve feet above, Fanny Morgan uttered a sharp cry as she saw the tragedy. She glanced at the huddled mass below, glanced at the jutting rocks around, then hurtled herself desperately through the air, and landed asprawl a yard away from her mistress.

She was on her feet in an instant. Fortunately the rock had not fallen on Beatrice. Fanny dragged her out of the debris, and brushed the dust from her face.

"Are you hurt, Miss Betty?" she questioned eagerly. "Speak to me. 'Tis Fanny."

Beatrice uttered an unintelligible groan, and her hand grasped her leg above the knee.

Fanny Morgan's hand ran swiftly over the spot her mistress had indicated. She looked anxiously up into Miss Betty's face, already haggard with pain, and a single involuntary tear fell upon her hand.

Miss Innisdale's leg was broken.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAYS OF LONG AGO.

"Don't be discouraged, Miss Betty; I'll get you out of this."

Her voice was husky, and lacked its usual enthusiasm, but her eyes flashed with the glint of determination.

Could Fanny Morgan feel the confidence she tried to instil? She hardly knew where she was; around her was an untrod forest of mountain ash and towering pine and jagged rocks, with, for all she knew, hostile Indians in the background. How far from home she was she had no idea;—certainly not within a week of brisk walking. Her mistress was stretched out with a broken leg: she probably would be unable to move for a month at least; the journey before them she could not hope to attack for several months.

She dipped what was left of her dress into cold water, and gently bathed the injured leg of her mistress; then carefully she pulled and patted the leg till she felt sure the fractured bone-ends were in their place. She broke two bits of dry stick, and wound around them ribbon-like strips torn from Miss Innisdale's clothing. She tore several other long strips, placed her improvised splints on both sides of the fractured leg, and bandaged the whole carefully. Beatrice gritted her teeth, and the color came and went in her face, but she uttered never a groan, nor a word, till the girl had completed her ministrations.

"This is terrible," she gasped then. "What are we going to do?"

"I shall do whatever is possible, Miss Betty," the girl answered. "You can do nothing now, so don't worry yourself. Just lie still, and try to get well. Above all,

don't attempt to move your leg; it will only get worse if you do. I'm going to take a look around; I'll be back in a few minutes. Then we'll try to decide on something."

She started briskly down the stream. It was nearly half-an-hour when she returned.

"How's your leg?" she enquired tenderly.

"It hurts terribly," Beatrice answered. "My bones seem to be on fire."

"I know," she replied. "But it will soon ease you. Say, I've found the cosiest little nook for you, half-way down the river. We'll go there now, before your leg ceases to hurt."

"I hope it isn't far," said Beatrice with a sigh of resignation. "I don't feel as if I could walk a step."

"Walk?" gasped the girl, "who's going to let you walk? I shall carry you there."

"You, Fanny? You can't manage that, dear. I'm as heavy as you are."

"Can't I? We'll see." She knelt before her mistress as she spoke. "You place your arms around my neck, so. Now, hang on firmly, but don't try to help yourself otherwise, and leave your leg entirely to me."

She thrust her hands under her mistress' body, the one bearing almost its entire weight, the other barely steadying the leg, and lifted her gently. She shuffled slowly along over rocks and creepers, now in the water and now on dry earth, as steadily as if she carried a basket of eggs. Fifty yards from the starting-point, she paused in a level space.

"I am going to rest you here a minute," she said. "Come down, easy."

She deposited her burden on the pebbly ground, then sank down beside her, a smile of satisfaction in her eyes.

"I didn't jar you that trip, did I?" she enquired.

"You didn't, dear," Miss Innisdale answered. "But I am too heavy for you. Have we much further to go?"

"Not so very far," the girl replied, "and I'll get you

there all right. I could have carried you farther now, but I didn't want to get tired and stumble with you. I'm rested now; we'll go for another trip."

Again she covered about the same distance, and again rested. The perspiration was oozing from her face, and she was panting hard, but the light of success was in her eyes.

"I did not think it would be so easy to carry you," she laughed. "You are not very heavy."

"Fanny, you are a wonderful girl," said Beatrice. "If we ever get back to Innismount, I shall try to show you what I think of you."

"Please don't talk that way, Miss Betty," the girl answered sadly. "I shall never have an opportunity of showing you what I think of you. Come, we'll make another start."

Five other trips like these brought them to their destination. It was a small, low cave almost at the edge of the water, fairly well lighted, and commanding a view of the river to the next curve, a hundred yards away. Within, the girl had, on her former visit, prepared a couch of moss, grass and twigs. Upon this she gently laid her mistress.

"This is where we are going to live for the present," she said cheerfully. "I found two other caves, but this is the best. Now, I'm going to get some berries for supper. Then we can decide what to do."

In a short while she returned with an ample supply, which she spread before her mistress. Beatrice ate a handful, but she was too troubled to enjoy them.

"You have been very thoughtful, Fanny," she said. "But what are we going to do after this? We surely can't remain here for ever feeding upon nuts and berries."

"No, Miss Betty," Fanny replied. "We must plan something to do next. I was only arranging for the

present; for the rest, you must decide, or both of us together.''

''I can think of nothing,'' Beatrice answered, ''and my poor head aches with thinking. We might live in this place for a hundred years, and no one chance upon it, unless it be an Indian. It will be months before I shall be able to move; perhaps never, for unless I get some attendance my leg is not likely to heal of itself. If I send you on to Innismount for help, you could not get there in less than a week or ten days, unless you went by the way you came, and on that the Indians would be likely to capture you. But even if you reached home safely, it would be some two weeks before help could reach me; and, left alone in these hills, with wolves, and bears, and Indians, and a broken leg, I could not hope to last that long.''

''Why, Miss Betty,'' cried the girl, ''how unlike yourself you talk! Three days ago, when you lay on the rocks, with two armed Indians on guard on either side, you were, I think, in greater danger. Yet help reached you there. Now no enemy is in sight and your most devoted attendant is beside you, yet you would despair. Does your leg still hurt awfully?''

''Terribly, dear; and it makes me cross even with you.''

''I am glad to hear it,'' the girl answered, desperately optimistic. ''I've heard that when a fracture is knitting rapidly the pain is intense. It will soon be over now. Come, lay your head upon my lap and try to sleep.''

She sank on the couch, and, lifting Miss Innisdale's head into her lap, gently soothed her forehead. But Beatrice was in no mood for sleep, and in the wild silence of the hills, her fears augmented themselves.

''Fanny,'' she said after a long pause, ''when I die, you must continue back to Innismount and tell them——''

''Don't, Miss Betty,'' the girl interrupted. ''You are

not going to die. I'll attend to you till you are well enough, and then I'll find some means——''

''Nonsense, child. I'm not afraid to die, and I have made up my mind that it is the only way to end all this.''

''If you'd only try to sleep, Miss Betty,'' Fanny chided, ''the pain in your leg would soon cease, and when you wake up you'd be yourself again.''

''I have tried, dear, but I cannot sleep,'' she answered wearily. ''Why should this trial,—these sorrows,—come to me?''

''Have you ever tried to think, Miss Betty, how much worse off you might have been?''

''Worse, dear? How could I be worse off than I am at present, lost in an untrod forest a thousand miles from home and friends, and laid up with a broken leg?''

''You might now have been a captive in an Indian village, doomed to a lifetime of misery and torture, with no hope of ever again seeing those dearest to you.''

''True, dear,'' Miss Innisdale replied, ''yet it could not last. Death would end it early.''

''Would it?'' asked the girl. ''Sorrow does not kill, Miss Betty. The wretch who hungers for death generally lives longest.''

''You are a grim philosopher, Fanny. Yet you cannot realize what such a life as you picture would mean to me.''

Fanny Morgan did not reply at once. When at length she did, it was as if awakening with a sudden thought.

''Miss Betty,'' she said, ''ten days ago you would not have believed all this possible, should you?''

''I have lost all count of time, Fanny,'' Beatrice replied. ''But in that distant past in which I lived and was happy I could never have expected this.''

''And if I had told you,'' Fanny continued, ''of another case precisely like it, you would have laughed at the tale as ridiculous fancy.''

"I don't know. It does seem a nightmare even now. Was there such another case?"

She nodded her head almost imperceptibly, and once more lapsed into silence. Beatrice repeated her question, but the girl did not at once reply.

Suddenly she roused herself with an effort.

"Miss Betty," she said, "you have several times asked me about my early life. Shall I tell it to you now?"

"If you will, dear. I have always wondered why you are so much of a mystery, and why the story of your childhood has been so strictly guarded."

"It must be a secret still," the girl snapped almost impatiently. "I tell it to you because you love me, because you deserve it, and because it will help to cheer you up. You must forget it when we return to Virginia: I am not seeking sympathy."

Beatrice had become so accustomed to these queer, contradictory outbursts from the girl in reference to her past, that she was not surprised. She remained silent.

"Your father," Fanny went on, "is one of the wealthiest planters of Virginia, a soldier, a gentleman, and a friend of the governor's. Lord Dunmore is the greatest personage in the country, yet even he is but the humble servant of his king. My father was the supreme king of our country, a peer of His August Majesty George the Third, with governors, chiefs and emissaries to do his bidding and render him the tribute of their people."

Her eyes sparkled with an imperial beam they had sheathed in her captivity. She was a princess once more. She swallowed a gulp, and her voice cleared.

"I was his only child, the Princess Ubaba, the darling of the sweetest mother that ever lived, the spoiled and pampered pet of a noble and affectionate father, the idol of four hundred faithful slaves, the honored and beloved queen-to-be of Blessed Kubanda. I knew not what it

meant to toil, to care, to hunger for love. I was trained to be a queen,—that only.

"A neighboring chieftain, old enough to be my grandfather, sought to make me his bride. His suit was rebuffed, and his presents returned. Next morning his marauding army encamped before our gates.

"While my noble father and his warriors went forth to chastise the invaders, I went, unaccompanied to the temple of my God, where, with the priestesses, and the sacred Virgins of whom I was one, I offered prayer and song and sacrifice for the success of my countrymen.

"At nightfall I started homewards alone. Out of the thicket two villains sprang, and struck me unconscious with a single blow. Then away, away through distant forests they bore me, as the Indians carried you; deceiving, threatening, insulting me, but ever dragging me on.

"By daybreak my abductors learnt that my father, after dispersing his enemies, had discovered the loss of his child, and was hot upon their trail. They were on the point of slaying me, when, in the distance, there appeared a band of those detestable merchants who pander for your voracious countrymen blood of their own blood, and skin of their own.

"To the Darfoor traders I was sold, and away to the distant ocean I was hurried, footsore and famished and fainting. Never more was I to see the heavenly smile of my darling mother, never the proud adoring eyes of my incomparable father. The adulations of my slaves,—of my devoted maid, Piriba,—the acclamations of my loyal people, the affectionate bark of my faithful *Tum-tum*, the trees, the birds, the rivers of Kubanda, all were gone forever, never to re-appear except in the fitful dreams of my troubled sleep.

"With hundreds of others, I was huddled into a close, steaming, evil-smelling pen down in the bottom of a great ship. For months and months we rocked and lurched

about the ocean, never knowing where we were, or what was in store for us. Crowds died, and were cast overboard, but I—I had a greater sorrow, and so I lived.

"We reached Virginia at length, and breathed God's air once more. We were lined up in the market-place with chains upon our hands, and men came and bartered for us as if we had been so many hogsheads of tobacco, or so many bales of skin. And so I was sold into slavery, —I who had been a king's daughter!

"I was taken to the Sutcliffe Estate. My master was not considered brutal, yet servility had not been bred into me, and grew slowly. For four years I craved death, and had only sorrow instead. Then I came to Master Innisdale.

"Shortly after that I made up my mind to end it all in the only way that seemed possible. The inescapable insults, threats and demands of Master Culberson showed me how. For weeks he pestered me,—in the fields, in the settlement, in my cabin,—suing, promising, bartering, commanding.

"The first time he came, he found me reading your father's book. He asked where I got it; I told him Cuffy had found it on the dumping-ground and given it to me. He said it was all right; I could keep it, and have as many more as I wanted. Yet when I was adamant to all his entreaties, he brought me to the whipping-post upon a charge he knew was false.

"Even there, he continued to barter—with me who hated life. I struck him on his vile mouth, well knowing that such mutiny meant certain death.

"Then you stepped in, Miss Betty, and saved me for more sorrow. Yet you were kind to me. Yours were the first eyes in five miserable years in which I saw real love. You did not mock me with a meaningless sympathy; you acted as if I were but another girl of your own age, with aspirations, desires and ideals somewhat akin to yours. You kept me from slipping farther down, and I prayed

for the chance of showing that your love had not been wasted upon an unworthy creature. If ever the opportunity arrives, you will see that Ubaba, too, can love, and can die for her she loves.''

Beatrice had forgotten her fractured leg, her tender black eyes intent upon the enraptured face growing duskier in the shadowy twilight. At some unconscious moment during the narrative her hand had clasped that of the negress. Now she merely muttered:

''My sister in sorrow. How you must have suffered!''

''I suffered as you would have suffered in the servitude of the Indian,'' the girl answered. ''Yet my muscles are still firm, and my lips can even smile. *Sorrow does not kill.*''

CHAPTER XXIV.

SISTERS BUT IN BLOOD

Fanny Morgan spoke with a simple, straight-forward directness that gripped and held the interest of her tender-hearted mistress. The direct result of the narrative was to draw Beatrice's attention completely away from her own troubles into the changing fortunes of the girl. All signs of suffering had passed from her thin face, and an expression of surprised admiration beamed from her eyes.

"Tell me everything," she urged eagerly, "—all about yourself and your people and your country. I, at least, am your friend."

The girl, ever reluctant to discuss herself and her past, nevertheless saw the beneficial effect of her recital upon her mistress. For the first time since that eventful night which had changed and marred her entire future, she allowed her mind to wander freely over the scenes of her happy and untrammelled childhood.

The blackness without grew denser; within, the features of both were hidden. In the great alien heaven that curved over a narrow segment of the dim southwest, a dozen stars winked mockingly. The swishing of the waters almost at their very feet, the leaves that rustled in the breath of night, the countless though subdued noises of the wild hills, their own precarious plight and close, uncomfortable confinement, all were forgotten. Clasping each other's hands huddled closely together, the one recounted, the other absorbed, the tale of nature in its purest simplicity. For in the long-gone days, the Princess Ubaba had studied nothing else.

"That is Kubanda, Miss Betty," the girl concluded

with a faint sigh, "the Kubanda that I know and love; the dearest land on earth."

The moon had straggled into the bit of exposed sky, casting a pale glare into the cavern. It was nearly morning, yet neither girl craved sleep.

"One more," Beatrice pleaded. "There is one of your friends whom you haven't mentioned. Tell me about him, too."

"Another? I have told you all, Miss Betty."

"Some time ago," Beatrice reminded, "you said that you had loved some one."

She seemed to start at this, but in a few seconds recovered herself.

"That, Miss Betty, you will not understand," she answered slowly, "nor can I. It will only lead you to misjudge us both."

"No fear of that, dear," Beatrice replied. "I am myself a girl, and your dearest friend. I shall not misjudge you."

"Misjudge if you will," she answered daringly, with that quick change which had ever characterized her. "It is no shame to have loved the noblest,—the only man of his race who has ever deserved a woman's heart. I shall tell you all about him."

Her pressure on Miss Innisdale's hand relaxed. She rested her back more comfortably against a rock, and her eyes measured the distant patch of sky.

"He was of an alien race," she said softly, almost reverently, "the race most despised by our people, and for good reasons. Farther beneath me was he, much farther, than the meanest of your father's slaves is beneath you now. Had he been seen anywhere by any member of my tribe, he would have been killed on the spot, and the entire nation would have held a celebration of the event. Yet I protected him, saved him, and loved him."

"That was indeed noble of you, Fanny," said Beatrice.

"How did he come to win the enmity of your people so completely?"

"Principally," answered the girl, "by being born with skin of another color. He was a white man!"

"A white man," gasped Betty. "Are all white men, then, so unpopular in Kubanda?"

"They are not only unpopular," Fanny replied; "they are unknown, except in dreams and fairy tales. This was the only white man ever seen in my country, and only three persons saw him there;—myself and my two most trusted slaves.

"I had been alone in the woods that day. I heard the report of a gun, and went to investigate; for a gun was unknown to me then. I found him. He had shot a boar, but too late to save himself. The beast had gashed him nastily, and died upon him, its tusk buried in his flesh.

"I dragged the carcass from above him, and nursed him back to life. Then I found that he understood our language. I hid him in a cave, and returned to my people.

"My mother, whom I first consulted, told me that white men were voracious, cannibalistic fiends, and that if one were ever seen in Kubanda he would be killed at once. Piriba averred that there never was any such creature. But I persuaded her, and at length she went with me, and saw what she had denied to be.

"After that we went daily to his cave for the three weeks he remained. He told me the most wonderful things about his country and his people; he taught me his language, and he began teaching me to read.

"But he had, unconsciously, taught me something greater, something far more wonderful. I dreamt of him at nights; I saw him peep at me from behind every shrub when I walked alone; I saw him in the clouds, and in the blue sky between the stars.

"My heart hungered for him, and wakened me long before the dawn. At daylight I would hurry to be beside him, and my happiness was insane. Yet our people

are taught from infancy to keep our emotion in our heart, and wear a mask upon our brow. By heroic misery I concealed from his god-like eyes the fire that burnt my soul.

"The time for his departure came. My own ministrations had torn my heaven from me, and I knew that I should never be happy again, save only in remembering him. He promised to return to Kubanda,—to me,—and I knew he'd keep his word. And I promised,—but not to him,—that when he came again, I'd take his hand before all my people, and lead him out, and place him to sit on the throne of my fathers beside me, and he would be my world.

"That day I summoned Renjy, the most faithful of my slaves, and entrusted my idol to his care. It was a long and dangerous voyage to the shore of the great ocean, but Renjy was to guide and guard him there, bringing me word of his safe arrival.

"Then he was gone from me, and my heart went with him. He left me writings that I should learn to read, and he gave me this token, which I have worn upon my breast and guarded at the risk of my life, for when I see it, I think I gaze into his face."

She untied a string around her neck, and pulled from beneath the bosom of her tattered dress a small object that shone in the pale moon-light. It was an English shilling, with a small hole through which the string passed. She placed it reverently in Miss Innisdale's hand.

"I've seen it before," Beatrice exclaimed, "and wondered what it was. You kept it all these years?"

"I shall not part with it," she answered. "It reminds me of him."

"And have you heard of him since?"

"Not a word. Renjy did not return, though for three long years I waited. Perhaps he had taken the lad with

him to England, that they should return together to Kubanda."

"What was his name?" Beatrice asked.

"I did not need to know his name," she answered, "for to me he was the only one. But since I came to the white man's country, I've often wished I knew it. There are the letters 'A. H. P.' on his gift. Those may be his initials."

"Possibly. Yet that would offer little help. And you love him still?"

She opened wondering eyes at her mistress.

"Of course I do. Love never dies. He is the only man I shall ever love, though all I had hoped is now impossible.

"It was my thoughts of him that partly reconciled me to my lot. There were white men on the ship, and they were going to the land of the white man. I felt sure I should meet him there, a king amongst them; and then my troubles would cease.

"I practised the language that he had taught me, and tried to learn more from my captors. You have said that I speak better English than the other slaves;—that's why. When we landed from the ship, I looked for him everywhere, and it was long afterwards I learnt that this was not England,—not the country where he lived."

"And are you still trying to find him, Fanny?"

She hesitated for a moment.

"What difference could it make, Miss Betty?" she asked slowly. "I was a princess then; now, I'm but a negro slave."

The darkness slowly dispersed. The stars fled from the sky. The moon became a sober gray.

"Why, it's daylight." Fanny Morgan cried. "I've kept you up all night, Miss Betty. Does your leg feel better now?"

"My leg? Why, I forgot all about it," Beatrice answered. "But you have taught me a great lesson, Fanny.

I shall endure my troubles even as you have endured yours.''

''I was sure of it, Miss Betty,'' the girl answered; ''that's why I told you all. But you will not repeat it. Please promise me.''

''Why, Fanny,'' Miss Innisdale answered thoughtfully, ''what harm can it do? I intend to help you all I can, and what you have told me may aid. You will not urge me to keep it secret.''

''Miss Betty,'' she pleaded tenderly, ''if you had been taken to the Indian village, and had been dragged down and humiliated till you were below the meanest of the red-skins, you wouldn't want the story of your past to be proclaimed abroad, should you?''

''No, Fanny, I should not,'' Beatrice conceded; ''but in your case——''

''Please promise me, Miss Betty,'' Fanny interrupted, ''or I shall be sorry I told you. So long as I live, you'll not repeat it, unless I say you may.''

''Very well, dear; since that is your wish, I promise. But I think you are making a mistake.''

''Thank you,'' she said. ''Now I shall go to seek more berries. You ate but few last night. There are plenty around; I shan't be long.''

In fifteen minutes she was back, with a supply of nuts and berries, together with an armful of dripping water-cresses she had found. Last night she had been the Princess Ubaba, wafted back to beloved Kubanda on the wings of unrestricted fancy, and encouraged by Miss Innisdale's sympathetic ear: this morning she was Fanny Morgan once more, her only apparent thought the care and welfare of her young mistress. She examined her bandaged leg, arranged her shabby dress and tangled hair with the same devotion she had practised at Innismount, and then placed before her as tempting a breakfast as the situation permitted.

Beatrice ate the repast with quiet resignation, and it

was the slave-girl who once more reverted to the predicament they were in.

"Miss Betty," she asked, "have you yet decided on any plan for us to follow?"

"I can think of nothing, dear," Beatrice answered. "Have you something to suggest?"

"It seems to me," she replied, "that we cannot wait here for chance aid; neither can we await your complete recovery. I could reach Innismount in five days; possibly four. I could bring you help in ten days at most."

Beatrice did not reply. She was looking at the suggestion from every angle.

"There are lots of berries around," Fanny Morgan continued, "and I have little doubt I can find more cresses. I shall make your couch nearer to the edge of the stream, so that you can get water without having to move your leg; and if I place the cresses and berries in the water, within reach of your hand, they will probably keep for three or four days. After they are gone bad, you will have to depend on nuts. They will keep for a very long time, and I can gather enough to last you a month. Of course, you'll be very lonely and uncomfortable, but every day you'll know that help is nearer."

"And you," Beatrice answered unselfishly, "would go by the way you came, along the river, although you know that by this time it is watched by the Indians."

"I'm not afraid of them," the girl answered lightly. "I have already outwitted them more than once, and now I shall be doubly cautious. If you promise not to despair, and not to move your leg, I shall go, and shall bring you help as quickly as it can be done."

"It is a desperate chance, Fanny," said Beatrice, "yet it seems the only chance. If you think it best, dear, you may go. I can do nothing."

She divested Miss Innisdale of her skirt, and, using it as a bag, started off into the woods. Trip after trip she made, and long before noon, she had collected several

bushels of nuts and berries, as well as a good supply of water-cresses. When she was satisfied that her store was sufficient, she prepared a new couch about a yard from the edge of the water, and lifted her mistress to it.

"The shelter is not as good as it is farther in the cave," she said, "but the sun will only strike you for less than an hour,—in the afternoon, when its heat is spent,—and rain will not catch you unless there is a strong wind in this direction. In that case, you'll have to try to roll back just a little. Is there anything else I ought to arrange?"

"Nothing else, dear," Beatrice answered. "I'll make out very well."

"You'll be alone for a long time, Miss Betty," said the girl. "You will not fret and worry, shall you?"

"I shall not worry, dear. I promise you."

Fanny Morgan looked at her with a taunting smile.

"Does the white woman keep her word?" she asked.

Betty's answers had been palpably formal. The question jolted her.

"Yes, dear," she answered firmly, "the white woman keeps her word."

"She's as true as the black, isn't she?—and as brave?"

"She is both, dear. As true and brave as any princess, white or black. We are sisters, Fanny; sisters in misfortune. You shall never disown me. Here is my hand."

Fanny Morgan raised the thin, white hand to her lips.

"Thank you, Miss Betty," she said. "I knew it. But it is so hard to be brave sometimes."

"There can be no immediate danger," said Beatrice, "unless the Indians pick up your tracks and follow them here."

"I shall be very careful to leave none in the neighborhood," the girl answered, "and they can hardly find you here by chance. But even if they take you away, do not despair: I shall follow you again, and rescue you out of their securest stronghold. If by any chance friends come

upon you before I return, and wish to remove you, lay a handful of these pebbles to form a circle in this space, that I may know you are safe. If Indians come, lay them to form a cross if you have time; if not, I shall know."

"I'll do that, dear," Beatrice replied. "And every morning I shall drop a pebble in this corner, so that you may know how long I stayed. Now, go, dear. May God bless you."

Fanny Morgan took the hand she held out, and clasped it firmly between hers.

"Miss Betty," she said in a voice the other had never heard before, "it is a long, hard journey. If I am later than I promised, you will not despair: if you never see me again, you will not think I have deserted you."

"Kiss me, dear," Beatrice answered tenderly, "—no, my lips, not my hand. I know you now, Fanny. Whatever happens, I shall never, never think that you had forsaken me."

She was gone, tripping swiftly, buoyantly over the rocks as if she went on some joyous errand. Beatrice watched her till she disappeared where the river curved out of sight, then she brushed a tear-drop from her eye, and, sighing wearily, sank back to contemplate the impossible task she had set herself,—the task of *not to worry*.

Reared in the lap of luxury, a dozen servants to her every call, the pampered idol of an adoring father, ever the centre of a crowd of friends and admirers, it was almost impossible that Beatrice Innisdale should accept her lot with that stoicism which heredity had bestowed upon Fanny Morgan. Her very helplessness and inactivity removed the chief sustenance that the spirit of the negro princess had enjoyed; and her lack of communion with her kind focussed her attention on her fate, and intensified the magnitude of her suffering.

Yet it was the story of the negress that she now

contemplated; it was the uncomplaining fortitude of the Princess Ubaba that she tried to emulate; it was her promise to Fanny Morgan that she over and over resolved to fulfil. Repeatedly she convinced herself that the white woman was as heroic, as strong-willed, as the black; then slowly her thoughts drifted back to the consideration of her actual situation. Ah; but she did not know of the fears, the aches, the utter desperation that had, too, assailed the heart of the Princess Ubaba.

The evening passed slowly along. Her leg had not been unduly painful all that day; there had been so much to draw her mind away from her physical suffering. Now, her greatest task was to devise something that would keep her thoughts from her surroundings,—something that would take the place of thinking.

She tried to reconstruct and repeat long scenes from Shakespeare which she had read, or seen in the theatre at Williamsburg. She tried to recite lengthy passages from Milton, from Pope, from the Bible. She endeavoured to remember, to translate, criticise and improve, the long Latin poem her brother had written for the Fifth of November Exercises at William and Mary the year he graduated.

At length her over-taxed mind sought repose, and she slept soundly till the sunlight of another day suffused the hills.

She dropped a pebble in the appointed corner, to number her days, breakfasted from the supplies left her, and washed it down with water she scooped up with her hands.

She began to feel more cheerful after that. She had unbounded faith in Fanny Morgan, and felt assured of her success. She hummed snatches of lively airs she knew, though she was careful not to raise her voice. She made imaginary pictures of the small bit of landscape she could see, and of other landscapes she had seen. She addressed poems to nature, to the woods, to the hills;

and as she had no means of writing them, she spoke them out aloud.

She slept early that night, but her slumber was less restful. Towards morning, her sleeping mind reverted to her plight. She dreamt that, with Fanny Morgan, she was fleeing from the Indians. They reached the edge of the mountain, and stood on the brink of a precipice, its sheer, perpendicular sides lost in the smoky depths below. Behind them was a murderous, yelling crowd; on either side the rocks rose impassable. At that instant, a white man whose eyes shone like twin suns, mounted on a foaming wild boar, dashed out of the clouds, and charged into the pursuing Indians. They scattered to right and left, but one bronzed warrior, fleeing in their direction, stumbled against Fanny Morgan. Beatrice put forth a hand to steady her companion: the pair swayed for an instant, then, fast in each other's embrace, toppled over the edge of the precipice. Down, down, down they sank; it seemed as if they would never reach the bottom; till at length the smoke cleared, and they saw, directly beneath them, a massive bonfire, around which a host of Mabode warriors danced while they brandished threatening spears.

She uttered a piercing scream, and sat bolt upright, her frightened eyes scanning the surrounding gloom. The perspiration oozed freely from her face and hands; her veins were swollen taut and pulsing rapidly.

Sleep forsook her after that. Some telepathic instinct told her that Fanny Morgan was in danger, and that danger to her was its inevitable consequence.

The distant hill-tops reflected the waxing moonlight. She knew it was nearing dawn. She lay awake, and gave her direful forebodings unbridled scope.

That day she was miserable. She ate nothing, and strained her ears for the approaching footsteps of her pursuers. Every falling leaf or rustling twig, every gust

of wind through the branches, gave her a new scare. Yet the long day wore slowly away, and nothing happened.

Her leg, too, had ached terribly. That she had hurt it during her troubled sleep she had little doubt, but the bandages were still firm in their place, and she could do nothing. She abandoned herself to her sorrow.

That night she dared not sleep. Her brain burned within her; she was nervous and restless, almost hopeless. One of two things, she felt sure, had happened to her maid. Either the girl had been taken by Indians, or else she had fallen over some precipice as she herself had done, and now lay huddled and helpless below. No other explanation of her dream seemed possible.

When the logs crackle merrily in the hearth, and the laughter of loved ones fills the cosy room, it is easy to spurn dreams as figments of idle fancy: alone and helpless, in a tractless forest, hundreds of miles from the nearest habitation, with one chance in a million of succor, and maddened savages on the hunt, they carry a portent the boldest may not ignore. Beatrice gave her imagination full play, and her fears fattened on themselves.

The night dragged on more slowly than the day. After an eternity of suspense almost unbearable, the first signs of day appeared. Tardily the dawn crept over the hills; some fatalistic instinct told her it was the last. She dropped another pebble in the corner where she had kept tab on the days of her solitude, and counted the number. Three? She had expected to find a thousand.

It was broad daylight now, and her vigil was easier. Whatever fate menaced her would not come unseen. She remembered her promise to Fanny Morgan,—a cross of pebbles if Indians came upon her;—for Indians was all she feared. True, Fanny Morgan might never return, yet—she would keep her word.

She was not fully conscious now. All night, fitful, mocking images had danced before her; in the bright sunlight they still flitted by. She closed her eyes to keep

out the maddening vision. Yet she could not sleep, and the waking nightmares were worse than any that might have infested her dreams. She wondered whether she was going mad; she knew her sanity could not last much longer.

The sun peered down upon her. She knew it was late afternoon. Heavens! Must she endure another night of this? Another night? And that would not be all;—a week, a month, a year, an eternity, till sanity was gone and vacuity came;—vacuity, or death.

She started up;—it could not be at a sound, for there was none. She peered down the river-course. Around the curve, a hundred yards away, an Indian darted. She rubbed her eyes, lest this was but another dream, then looked again. It was not fancy this:—an Indian sprang lightly over the rocks towards her, war-paint and gun and brandished knife proclaiming his race and purpose.

Suddenly he paused, and gazed into the cave. His eyes met hers. He turned, and uttered a shout of triumph. From around the curve, three other Indians sprang beside him. He pointed to the cave, then called again. Two other Indians came up. Six she saw, and still others were coming.

Beatrice turned calmly over on her side. She was not afraid now. Reality was less trying than suspense. From the heap of pebbles that lay before her, she gathered a handful, and coolly laid them out to form a cross.

CHAPTER XXV.

AMONG FIENDS.

Fanny Morgan sped down the river-course with all the agility that nine days of wild roaming in untraversed forests had left her. The encouragement and confidence she had read in Miss Innisdale's eyes at their last parting seemed to have added to her strength of purpose, and she covered the ground at an incredible speed.

By keeping to the water whenever possible, she felt that her trail could not be easily found, and whenever she had to struggle through the jungles, she was careful to leave little sign of her passage. Yet, with the natural instinct of the forest-bred, she closely noted the hills, the woods, the watercourse and the general contour of the country, so that, on her return, she could at a glance, readily locate the spot from any direction.

The girl did not under-estimate the difficulties before her. That hostile Indians infested her path she never doubted: yet she knew that only by following her former trail could she make the quickest time.

It was near noon when she started on her hazardous journey. An hour after the sun disappeared from her view, she came upon the wide river up which she had followed her mistress. She figured that she had covered some forty miles in perhaps eight hours.

It was no longer necessary to cover her tracks. She picked up her former trail, but soon discovered that it had since been followed by persons going in the same direction in which she was now travelling. She swam across the river, resolved to journey along the farther bank.

There was no moon, and the night was dark, but the

river marked her course unmistakably. She plodded on, making poor progress in the darkness, yet unwilling to lose any time. It was nearing midnight when she sank into a thicket for a brief respite.

She slept soundly for a few hours. When she awoke the moon was just appearing over the hills. She once more started on her journey, making better speed in the increasing moonlight.

Daylight brought her greater aid. She remembered points she had passed on her trip up the river, and felt that she was now going faster. That she should reach Innismount in three days more seemed certain.

She felt almost worn out when she sank under the trees the second night. In order to finish the journey, she must have more rest. She allowed herself some five hours' sleep, once more awaking with the moon.

Again she pushed forward, tearing through the undergrowth with more speed than caution. She was rapidly discounting her chances of falling into hostile hands. Her immunity for two days lent her courage. The forest was a big place, and unless the Indians were within a hundred yards of her, she might yet pass them unobserved.

A gruff call, almost at her elbow, froze the blood in her veins. Abruptly she stood motionless as one of the pine trees around, but the ruse which had formerly saved her from Indian observation came too late now. Two savages, who might have been tree-trunks in the darkness, approached, one on either side, and bound her hands together.

"Save me," she pleaded, "I am lost in the forest."

The men did not seem to understand English. They gave no answer, but led her off into the deeper woods.

At the base of a small hill half-a-mile farther they halted, and one of them gave a low whistle. A dozen men seemed to spring noiselessly out of the earth, and surrounded them.

For a moment the Indians conversed together. Then one of them, who seemed to be the leader, approached her.

"Who are you?" he demanded in a coarse, guttural half-English, which, however, was not unintelligible to the girl.

"I am a poor slave-girl," Fanny Morgan answered. "I am lost in the forest, and but seek my way out."

"Why did you come into the forest?" the Indian asked.

"I came with my mistress," Fanny replied.

"Where is your mistress?" asked the savage.

"She is laid up in the woods with a broken leg," answered the girl. "I must take her aid."

"Take us to your mistress," the man ordered.

She hesitated for a moment, than sank to her knees.

"Great chief," she cried pleadingly, "my mistress is the only person who has been kind to me in my long captivity. She is dear to me as a sister, and I cannot betray her. Will you promise me on the word of a brave warrior, will you swear by the Great Spirit to whom you trust for admission to the Happy Hunting Grounds in the hereafter, that if I lead you to my mistress you shall do her no harm, and shall return her to her friends and her home?"

The Indian chuckled hoarsely, and translated her reply to those of his men who did not understand English. The company uttered a wicked, gleeful laugh.

The Indian turned to her once more, without answering her question.

"Is your mistress," he asked, "the woman who was taken up the river in a boat by four of my countrymen?"

"She is the same, great chief," Fanny admitted. "But she must have been mistaken for another. My mistress has never done injury to anyone."

"Where are her rescuers?" asked the Indian. "We are looking for her and for them."

"They are somewhere in the woods," the girl answered. "I have not seen them."

"What?" cried the Indian. "Have they deserted her?"

"No, great chief; they never found her."

"They did not? Then who struck down the men left to guard her, and fled into the woods with her?"

"I did," the girl replied. "My mistress has been kind to me, and I tried to save her, as you would have done for one of your own people whom you loved."

The Indians conversed among themselves once more. Apparently there was a difference of opinion, and the leader, perhaps because he had discovered the tracks of but one person, seemed to believe her.

Again he turned to her.

"With that we shall deal later," he said. "At present you must take us to the white woman. Upon your readiness to do so your own safety shall depend."

"Shall you save her for me, great chief," she asked, "and return her to her people?"

"No," roared the Indian angrily, "we shall take her to our people that they may have their revenge."

"Revenge? You mistake her," said the girl. "My mistress has never done anything that could merit revenge. What is her crime?"

"She is the squaw," said the Indian, "of the man who wrecked our homes and burnt our villages, who butchered our wives and our children, and trampled his bloody heels upon the breasts of our loved ones. We shall have our revenge though hosts of defiant palefaces bar our path."

"You are wrong," cried the girl. "The man who slew your people and won your hate is also an enemy of hers. He would do the same to her had he the power."

"We know otherwise," answered the Indian, "for many of our people have traded in your village, and know

the palefaces. Your prayers cannot save your mistress: lead us to her.''

''Please hear me, great chieftain of a great and noble tribe,'' cried the girl desperately. ''I am but as one of you. At the hands of the paleface, I have suffered cruelties, indignities, barbarities greater than any that have been inflicted upon you. Gladly would I see the white men driven from the land, and I should be first to tear out the eyes of the accursed monster who would wrong your people as he has wronged mine. But this my mistress has no share, no sympathy, in these cruelties. She alone is innocent of the white man's guilt. She loves my people and yours. Let your vengeance fall upon the strong brutal men who injure you, and I shall aid you; but this frail, fragile flower of Virginia, who has brought comfort to one broken heart, who has returned love to one barren soul, let your vengeance not fall upon her, and she will befriend and protect you from the white murderers. Save her for me, and your mercy will justify and uphold your cause.''

The Indian chuckled again,—that cold, heartless, mocking croak that rasped her nerves.

''No,'' he said slowly, ''I shall not save her. And I can lose no more time. You must guide us to your mistress.''

''I will not,'' she answered with a determination that steadied her voice. ''You may kill me if you will. I shall not betray her trust in me.''

''Oh, you won't?'' the Indian questioned tauntingly. ''We shall see.''

He gave a curt order to his men, and three of them darted into the woods. In five minutes they re-appeared, and approached the girl.

One of them carried a handful of small splinters of wood, whittled to a needle-point, the entire piece hardly bigger than a large needle. While one of the men stretched out the girl's left arm, and another held her

right, the third placed the needle-point upon the bare black skin, and pressed it slowly down till it sank about an inch into the flesh.

Fanny Morgan gave a slight twitch at the first pang of pain, then a film seemed to sheathe her eyes, and the spirit of her fathers woke up in her breast.

"Tell us where your mistress is," croaked her questioner, as the man applied a second needle some two inches lower down her arm.

The splinter sank. She uttered no sound; not a muscle twitched. Her eyes were fixed upon the pale moon that slowly grew paler; upon the myriad stars that twinkled in the distance, and then ceased to be stars. But to her they shone from another land. She was in beloved Kubanda once more, and she was again the Princess Ubaba.

Again she saw the lordly Ntikkigama as he sat in majesty to listen to the Mabode ambassadors, when not a muscle showed emotion though he knew his visitors were treacherous spies. Again she saw him wounded, troubled, but emotionless. So, she knew, he would have wanted her to endure pain,—as a Zandey, and a princess.

She could see the eyes of Alali, and of Piriba, and of the legions of her people, admiring her stoicism. Again she was one of the bundu before the sacred altar of Gumbah, and she heard and saw the encouragement and approbation of the priestesses and the sacred virgins. A single wordless, expressionless prayer burst from her heart to that Great Light to whom, though it had consistently disregarded her appeals, she had never ceased to pray,—it was for the safety of the white woman, helpless in a mountain cavern a hundred miles away. The voice of Alali rang in her ears: "Choose honor rather than life, for love and truth and purity live after death."

Her tormentors had stuck a dozen splinters into her left arm, and, finding no more room, turned to her right. Great drops of perspiration stood on her brow, and her heart was throbbing fast. The pain was excruciating, but

she would not give her enemies the satisfaction of knowing that she felt. She hoped only for strength to endure expressionless till she could endure no more.

"Give her another spike," she heard the monotonous growl of the leader again and again. "Now, are you willing to tell us where your mistress is?"

Her strength was rapidly slipping from her. Her head was whirling, and the moon was skipping about the wide, hazy heavens. She felt her consciousness was going,—her life was being dragged away from her by the unending torture of these hell-fiends. And there was no hope, no rescue, except the sacrifice of her mistress.

"Another spike, boys. Now, are you willing to show us where your mistress is?"

"Come, I'll take you to her," she gasped, and sank to the ground exhausted.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CIRCLES OF FIRE.

It was some minutes before Fanny Morgan recovered sufficient strength to rise from the spot where she had fallen. Around her stood a grinning circle of painted savages, their eyes gleaming with fiendish satisfaction at the success of their orgy.

The prods, which had been left in her flesh, were, at the order of the captain, deftly withdrawn; one of the Indians took his place at her left side, and two others, with their rifles held ready for any emergency, followed close behind. The rest of the company trooped after, some sixteen men in all, armed with guns, spears and long knives.

The first streaks of dawn were already lighting the eastern hills. Fanny Morgan set her face steadily towards the day, and led the way silently. She reached the river, and continued *down* its course. That she could for long deceive her captors she dared not hope; yet whatever respite she could win might be to her advantage. The course she followed led towards Virginia, and from Virginia alone she still expected help. Ten days before, when she had travelled that same road in the reverse direction, she had firmly expected Miss Innisdale's rescuers to overtake her: now she as sincerely hoped she should meet them on the trail.

The day broadened out. She hurried along as speedily as when she went alone. Her arms were sore, and hung almost helpless at her side, but, cat-like, she crept through the thickets with little need for them.

The sun had covered a quarter of its course. She kept her eyes and ears alert for some sign of possible help,—

for some means of escape. But she was too closely watched to make an attempt advisable. If they would only follow her at her killing speed till night, perhaps——

The captain came up to her.

"Girl, is your mistress far away?" he asked.

"Yes, far," she answered; "very far."

"How long were you in coming?"

"Nearly three days," she replied. "It's a long distance."

"In this direction?"

"In this direction," the girl repeated. "I came up the river."

"You lie," roared the Indian. "Had you been three days' journey down the river, you would have been in the white man's country. You would not have come here seeking aid."

"We thought we ought to have been in the white man's country," Fanny replied. "But we were lost, and did not know where we were."

"Then show us the trail by which you came," said the Indian, "that we may know you speak truth."

"I have been looking for it," the girl answered, "and must be close to it; but I took pains not to make it too plain, and now I cannot find it."

" 'Twere best you did, and that right soon," the Indian snarled, "else you'll regret trying to deceive us."

Fanny Morgan began zig-zagging through the woods, as if in search of a trail, but without success.

In another hour, the Indian halted his men on a little cleared knoll that over-looked the river. As he spoke to them, there was something in his voice and manner that sent a chill through the girl's strong heart. She tried to nerve herself for whatever ordeal of torture was in store for her, and assured herself that she would die without betraying her mistress. For she knew she had not enough strength left to outlive much suffering.

The Indians hastily scattered into the woods, leaving only the leader and one of his men to guard the girl. The leader turned to her.

"We knew from the outset," he said, "that you were deceiving us, and hoping to lead us into the hands of the paleface like suckling babes. But it suited our purpose to follow you here, since here, in any case, we intended to come. Now you shall see how the Indians treat those who would betray them."

"Yet, great chief," the girl pleaded, "you would have me betray one who is dear to me, and has never done harm to you. Think how much meaner that would be."

The savage did not answer. His lips curled with a mocking sneer, and his eyes flashed a malicious fire. He gave a curt order to his companion, and turned away.

The man led Fanny Morgan to a tree near the top of the mound, and bound her to it with a tough thong. One by one the other Indians returned, each bearing a bundle of fire-wood. They threw them near the tree, and hurried back for other bundles.

Surrounding the tree, ten paces away, the dried wood was piled into a great circle. Another circle of heavier wood was piled inside of that, five paces away from the girl. When these preparations were complete, the Indian once more approached her.

"We are going to light the outer timber," he said, "and while that burns, if you decide to come to terms, it may be possible to rescue you. The inner circle will be lighted by sparks from the other,—I cannot say how soon. When that starts to burn, we can do nothing. Choose for yourself."

Not the entire line of Zandey kings, from that first, deified ancestor lost in hallowed mythology to the renowned Ntikkigama who now, perhaps, still sat on the throne of his fathers, ever lifted a prouder head, ever expressed a scorn more regal, than Fanny Morgan turned to her tormentor.

"Murderous, dishonorable coward, I defy you," she said. "You are sixteen armed warriors, against one unoffending girl; yet you descend to *this*. Your barbarity shall avail you nothing. If, perchance, you escape the fate you deserve, and return to your wigwams to boast to your squaws and your brats of the valorous deeds you have achieved, you will have to admit that you were defied and beaten by a girl,—a negro slave girl."

She turned her back upon him. He shrugged his shoulders and walked slowly away. One of the men produced a tinder-box, and started a fire.

In a few minutes the entire outer circle was a blazing mass, through which it was barely possible to distinguish the girl. She stood motionless, as queenly as when she had addressed the warriors of Kubanda. The smoke blinded her; she struggled for breath, as if the circle of fire cut off her supply of air; the heat on all sides grew intense; but still she uttered no sound. This, she knew, was the end; it could not be long delayed. And in a mountain cavern far away, her wounded mistress waited! Would Miss Betty ever understand that Fanny Morgan had not failed her?

The flames leapt across the vacant space, and caught the inner circle. The heat was unbearable now. She felt her bones slowly baking within her; she knew her blood was dried up, and an overpowering thirst seized her. Oh, for one drop of water from the blessed river of Kubanda!

She swallowed great gulps of thick, black smoke, but there was not a breath of air. Her eyes watered, and were swollen tightly shut, yet before her vision countless black figures danced gleefully,—danced and laughed and prodded the fire with long, fiery poles.

Human endurance could stand no more. Fanny Morgan sank to the ground, and the flames around leapt to the skies in fiendish delight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RECOGNITION.

A boat rowed swiftly up the river. Behind it, three other boats trailed. In each boat were six men,—stalwart, and armed, and painted. Their eyes were on the blazing mound.

From the boat they signalled to the men on the hill, and received an answering signal. The Indian leader, with two of his men, hurried down to the edge of the water, as the foremost boat approached the shore. While it was still ten feet off, one of its occupants sprang lightly to the rocks.

He was a dark, tanned Indian, nearly six feet tall though rather thin for his height, with a long nose, and eyes, if possible, fiercer than those of the others. He ran hastily over the rocks to join the men.

"Whom have you there, Fat Bull?" he asked gruffly, pointing to the flaming hillock, and ignoring the perfunctory salute the other offered.

"A woman, chief," the other answered. "We caught her——"

"The woman we seek?"

"No, chief. Her negro slave. She was with her mistress and——"

"And you burn her? Fat Bull, you are a fool. Dead men tell no tales, nor dead slaves either. Keep her alive, and let her lead us to her mistress."

"I have tried to do so, chief; but the girl refuses——"

"Nonsense, Fat Bull. That is because you don't know how to question her. Go, rescue her. She'll tell *me*."

"It is too late, chief. The inner circle is ablaze."

"Coward," roared the chief, "do you bandy words

with me? Hey, men; get the woman out of the flames yonder. Quick! The inner circle burns.''

The men from the boats joined the Indians already on the hill, and madly attacked the flames. With long poles they tossed the blazing logs aside, drew back for a breath of air, then again attacked the fire. At length they made a road through the blazing embers, and two men, holding their breath, darted into the centre of the circle, lifted the limp figure there, and dragged it out into the open.

The chief looked on in silent satisfaction till he saw his victim's form drawn out of the flames. Then, without another glance at her, he turned to one of his followers.

''Revive her,'' he said. ''Give her drink and food. When she speaks, bring her down to me. Fat Bull, you'll accompany me to the boat.''

''What have you given her?'' he asked as the other joined him.

''I gave her the prods, chief; twelve in each arm, and fully an inch deep,'' Fat Bull answered. ''Then she promised to lead us to her mistress, but led us astray instead. After that, I gave her the fiery circles.''

''Not enough, Fat Bull; not nearly enough,'' said the chief. ''Your heart is as soft as your head. Watch me, Fat Bull. I swear that she shall lead me to her mistress if I have to flay her alive, and remove her flesh ounce by ounce. Already we have lost several days in the search for this white squaw, and we have not found a trace of her till this that you would burn. Without her aid, we mightn't find her for another month; and meantime the Virginians are arming for combat.''

''I know it, chief,'' Fat Bull replied. ''But this woman is different from any I ever saw before. She never uttered a groan at the prods; never seemed to feel them; and she never turned in the circle. She is the most stubborn creature I have ever seen.''

"I have met the kind before," the chief nodded. "Leave her to me, Fat Bull. I'll break her sure enough, and that without burning her;—at least, not till she has served my purpose. What have you learnt?"

"Nothing, chief. We have searched the country inch by inch, from the site of the rescue downwards, but there is not a trace anywhere of the missing woman, and not a track except that we discovered from the first. Have you found anything?"

"Nothing," answered the chief, "save that the woman has not returned to her people. We followed the river down to the Virginian borders, and undertook a trip inland. The search for the woman is still proceeding, and a band of white men, suspecting that she has been taken by Indians, has proceeded up the Wagawalla, as the natural road to what they call the Indian country. Others are busily preparing for an Indian war; but the government and the people are at loggerheads, and if the signs read correctly, the impending conflict will not be against us. But we shall not be afraid of the white man's vengeance, Fat Bull, only, we must find the woman first."

There was the crunch of feet on the pebbles. Fanny Morgan, supported by two Indians, was approaching.

It was the girl's utter exhaustion that had made her resuscitation possible. Had she been stronger at the time of her latest torture, she would have remained on her feet for a longer period, and probably inhaled considerably more smoke, and even flames. Collapsing as early as she did, however, she fell below the level of the densest smoke, and wholly escaped the flames, so that her chief trouble was lack of oxygen. Removed so soon afterwards, the rich ozone of the forest, the skill of the Indian medicine-man, and her own, enduring constitution immediately brought her partial relief.

Chief Longbeak gave a single glance at the approaching three, smiled grimly at Fat Bull, and faced in the

opposite direction. From a pouch, he pulled a tiny, sharp-pointed knife with a keen razor-edge, and stood idly stropping it on the palm of his hand.

"We have brought you the black woman, chief," said one of the Indians. "She is able to speak."

Longbeak spun round on his heels, his fierce eyes flashing fire. Perhaps he hoped to cow her in his first mad charge.

"They tell me," he snorted, "that you refused——"

His eyes met hers. The words froze on his lips. Slowly he sank on one knee, imitating the atonement of the white man.

"Is it you, my angel?" he whined in astonishment, "——you, you, you?"

Fanny Morgan's head had not sufficiently cleared to understand the change. She stood gazing silently at him.

"You stood beside her on the ship," said Longbeak. "You saved my child."

Suddenly recollection cleared her eyes.

"You are the man he threw overboard," she cried. "I thought I had seen you before, but could not remember."

"You saved my child," the Indian answered. "I owe you a life. Longbeak does not forget. You are free."

She stood gazing at him, hardly comprehending what his words meant.

"My men will convey you safely to the border of Virginia," Longbeak continued. "Your home is not far distant."

Fanny Morgan sank on her knees before the Indian, who had now risen.

"I thank you, great chief," she answered. "Yet, in the forest one dear to me lies helpless and wounded. Save her instead."

Longbeak's dark brows grew darker.

"I owe you a life," he repeated after a pause, "and my debt I repay to you. The woman did not save my

child; she stood by smiling. My obligation cannot be shifted about like a dead leaf in a windstorm.''

''Do not qualify your mercy,'' the girl pleaded. ''It was not your life I saved, but that of one dear to you. Repay the debt in kind, if you will repay, and save her who is dearest to me.''

The fierce eyes of the Indian shifted uneasily. For a moment he stood in deep thought, then turned to consult with his men. When again he spoke to her, he had recovered his cool determination.

''It cannot be,'' he said. ''To you I owe a life; that, I shall repay. The woman is the squaw of the man who brought death and sorrow into our land. To her, and to him and his people we can show no mercy. It is our oath.''

''You mistake, chief,'' cried the girl. ''The man you seek is an enemy to her also, and would bring upon her the desolation he has wrought upon your people. He is a dog, and deserves no mercy.''

''What?'' questioned the chief. ''Have I not seen them together on the foreign ship, with her hand in his? And have not numbers of my people seen them together in the fields and about the grounds of their estate? Neither of them is unknown to us.''

''It may be so, chief,'' Fanny replied. ''The man was her father's servant, and often sought her company. But when his insolence could no longer be tolerated, he was driven from the plantation. It was thus that she won his enmity.''

Longbeak eyed her sternly.

''Is that the truth?'' he asked.

''I swear it, chief, by the honor of my father.''

Once more he consulted with his men, then turned again to her.

''Some of my people,'' he said, ''think that you are deceiving us, but I am going to believe what you tell me. From this moment the search for your mistress shall

cease. Yet, I shall investigate what you say; and if you have deceived me, she shall be taken again though she took refuge in the governor's palace at Williamsburg, and you shall be taken with her, and burnt inch by inch beside her.''

''That will be but justice,'' Fanny Morgan answered. ''Yet he who would have justice should also give justice. Your countrymen bore my lady into the mountains, where she now lies helpless. Justice demands that they return her to her people.''

''So?'' The Indian turned a searching eye upon her. ''And fall into the hands of our enemies? It is a childish ruse, and you are daring to suggest it.''

''It is not a ruse,'' the girl replied. ''The life of my mistress is in great peril unless help reach her early. For this your men are doubly responsible, and it is but justice that you undo the wrong as far as lies in your power. I promise you that no one who aids in restoring her to her people shall be molested.''

He studied her answer for a moment.

''That is your promise,'' he said. ''Can you enforce it? Can you stay the white man's hand when it is raised in its greed for blood, and revenge, and barbarity?''

Their eyes met and held each other, flinty and firm and earnest.

''I am but a slave-girl,'' she conceded, ''yet I have the confidence of my mistress, and can promise in her name. Her father has power to enforce his will; and her will is his. I am willing to remain in your hands for three days after my mistress has been restored to her home. That will give her rescuers time to return to you; and if a hand is raised against them, you may wreak your vengeance on me.''

Minds that have lived close to nature *do* comprehend each other more fully than advanced civilization can understand.

Longbeak turned with a satisfied grunt.

"Come," he said. "You have not learnt the treachery of the paleface. I accept your word."

She let him take her sore and stiffened arm, and lead her into his own boat. The rowers bent to their oars under the urgings of their leader, and Fanny Morgan forgot her own pain and exhaustion as she realized that she was taking aid to her mistress,—and from the most unlikely source.

She was soon in animated conversation with the Indian, and learnt much of his history. Brother of the chief of his tribe, Longbeak had been selected for this mission partly on account of his prowess in war, and partly because, having traded extensively among the Virginians, he spoke their language fluently, and well knew both the habits and the country of the paleface.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

INDIAN FAITH.

Beatrice Innisdale completed her cross of pebbles, and turned listlessly over. Around her stood a jabbering, gesticulating band of savages. Yet she was singularly unafraid. She had long anticipated just such an end. She waited with tired *ennui* for the final chapter.

The crowd was thrust to right and left, and, from the rear, a slight, impetuous figure darted towards her, eyes rolling wide, and lips parted. It reached her side, and fell on its knees beside her. One stiffened arm reached about her.

"Miss Betty, I have come."

"Fanny?"

"I have come for you, Miss Betty. These are my friends. They will take you home."

Miss Innisdale's eyes drifted wanderingly over the surrounding group of painted savages. She closed them, and tried to rub away the mocking dream. When once more she opened them, the vision was unchanged, except that the girl was muttering impossible things in her ear.

"Fanny, is it really you? I dreamt you were dead."

"Not dead, Miss Betty. This is Chief Longbeak. You saw him on the boat at Innismount. It was his child we saved from the river,—you and I. He will save us in return."

She began to comprehend. She lifted a thin, quivering hand to the Indian.

"They thought you were the wife of that man," Fanny continued, "—of Culberson,—that's why they took you. They know now, and will undo the mischief as far as they can."

Preparations for the departure were soon made. It had been necessary to leave the boats far down the small stream, but two Indians lifted Beatrice with the ease and tenderness of a mother lifting her infant, and marched off with her. Fanny Morgan and the leader followed close behind, while the rest of the men either marched ahead to select and clear the path of the bearers, or trooped behind.

They reached the boats, and gently laid her in, then pushed off down the river once more,—towards home and friends.

Rowing with the current, they made far better time, and early next day they reached the spot from which Fanny Morgan had been taken on the return up the river. Longbeak ordered the two extra boats ashore to await him: it was not necessary that the three should proceed to Virginia.

The negress bent over her mistress, and kissed the pale lips.

"You will be safe in their hands," she whispered, "and they will take you to Innismount. See that they are not molested. I shall await them here, as a hostage to their safe return."

"What do you mean?" gasped Beatrice. "Remain here?—with them?"

"I shall be safe," answered the girl, "and I shall be free as soon as they return. I can, then, easily reach Virginia."

"We shall not be separated," said Miss Innisdale. "I shall not leave you in their hands. We have suffered together: we shall both perish or be saved."

"Be reasonable, Miss Betty," Fanny pleaded. "I shall be perfectly safe, and it is the only means of your being rescued. It is not fair to expect these men to risk their own safety by putting themselves into the hands of your friends, without some surety that no harm come to them."

Beatrice shook her head with cool determination.

"I shall not leave you here, Fanny," she answered. "I could not sacrifice you to win my own safety. If they cannot take us to Innismount, then let them leave us here, or at any other point along the river where they may think it safe to do so."

It was the Indian who came to the rescue.

"We shall take you to your home," he said, "and the promise of the dark woman shall be our only bond. Her word is more than that of any paleface."

"It shall be kept," Beatrice answered. "I thank you."

The single boat sped down the river. In it were Miss Innisdale and Fanny Morgan, with Longbeak and three of his men.

Two days later it pulled up beside the little quay at Innismount. The men lifted Beatrice gently, and started up the long walk that led to the house, the negress walking beside the bearers.

They had covered half the distance when Aunt 'Lizbeth, peeping out of the kitchen window, spied the procession. She uttered a shrill whoop, and darted down the passage, a frying-pan in one hand, while streaming tears mingled grotesquely with a broad grin across her happy face. Uncle Alec hobbled painfully behind with unexpected speed, while a group of domestics came running from every direction.

The reception accorded the mistress and her favorite maid was entirely beyond description, and swept in the unemotional Indians as well. Colonel Innisdale was still out on his abortive quest, but Beatrice ordered for each of her guides a suitable reward, assured them of her unconditional friendship, and bade them depart.

Then, on a couch near that on which her mistress had been laid and tended, grim anticlimax to her weeks of superhuman fortitude, Fanny Morgan sank, in a fever and delirium which for a fortnight kept her hovering

on the borders of unconsciousness; while the best surgical skill that the county afforded was barely able to save her putrefying arms, and assure her eventual return to perfect health.

It was four days later that Colonel Innisdale returned to learn of his daughter's safety and the devotion of the negro girl. By that time, various interests had already prevailed upon the governor to authorize an expedition against the Indians. The company was, however, sent in another direction; and, while neither avenging nor discovering the young lady on whose behalf it was mainly despatched, met and signally defeated another band of Indians near the mouth of the Kanawha River, and put an end to the fear of further Indian trouble.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A ZANDEY.

"We are sisters in misfortune," Miss Innisdale had said to her maid in the wild Virginian mountains, and she was never to forget the words.

So skilfully had her fractured leg been set, and so carefully had she been carried through the woods, that the doctors found it unnecessary to interrupt the work of healing so satisfactorily progressing; and by the time Fanny Morgan was able to leave her bed, Beatrice was also able to sit in the garden with her: and in their convalescence the two were still more closely drawn together.

Beatrice, whose injury was less constitutional, herself directed the ministrations to the negress, and the attendants were instructed to treat her with the same attention they bestowed upon her mistress.

Even Colonel Innisdale was not niggardly in his appreciation of the girl, and commended her devotion as strongly as he cursed the perfidy of Pompey, which had in the first place made the pursuit unavailing. On the suggestion of his daughter, the colonel promised the girl her freedom; but as any proposal for freeing a slave had to be passed upon by the Governor's Council, and as various matters more weighty than the fate of a negro girl were at that time causing the council the gravest concern, the colonel's application had to await its turn; and Fanny Morgan remained in name a slave.

Walter Hogslip, who had shown marked depression at the girl's disappearance, and who, on her return, had been told the entire story by Miss Crawford, soon obtained another opportunity of visiting her, and of once

more renewing his suit. But Fanny was as appreciative of his company as on the former occasion, and just as unresponsive to his love-making.

Once more on the road to recovery, the girl's strength grew rapidly, and her renewed contentment, as well as a certain satisfaction she must have felt in the esteem of her mistress, and her own knowledge of having deserved it, aided appreciably in her restoration.

With little to do, and complete freedom of action, she still spent most of her time in attendance upon her mistress. And when Beatrice, who was not yet able to remain long on her feet, would dismiss her to get some exercise and fresh air, she would generally go for a short walk through the woods, ending up with a stroll through the negro quarters, where she soon became a general favorite with the vari-colored throng of "pickaninnies" in whose games and pastimes she often took an active part.

Late one afternoon she stopped to watch the games of her "little friends." One little girl of perhaps three, who might have been white save for the jet-black mass of curly hair too thick to be purely Caucasian, and the tell-tale tinge of color in her sparkling gray eyes, had always been a special favorite of hers, and was hurrying now to join her. A few paces away, the child tripped over an exposed root, and sprawled to the ground.

Fanny hastened to lift the child, who lay on the ground crying. Her knee and elbow had been bruised in her fall, but Fanny wiped the dust from her face and hushed her tears. She enquired where the child lived, and, being shown, moved in that direction with the girl in her arm.

The cabin she approached was at the more secluded end of the settlement, some distance removed from the others. It seemed in better repair, and consisted of two rooms, besides a kitchen of its own leaning against it.

A woman met her at the door,—a thin, emaciated

creature who had not long before been a lovely mulatto girl. A six-month infant cooed in her arm, and her ragged skirt of gingham, finer than the other negroes wore, hung loosely on her slender frame-work of bones, as if, at the time when it had been fashioned, those bones had been rounded out by muscles since departed.

"Ah, Miss Fanny," she cried in a voice which the girl thought rich and sweet despite its quaint accent, not wholly English, yet an improvement on that of the average negro slave, "you've brung me my little Pearlie. Is she hurted?"

"No," Fanny answered with a reassuring smile; "merely bruised her knee and elbow in a fall. See, it is nothing. But Pearlie is my little friend, and I have brought her home."

"Thank you, Miss Fanny; you is wonderful kind," said the woman. "But they do tell wonders 'bout you in the fields, and I is been always wanted to talk with you. Won't you be pleased to come in and set yourself down?"

She pushed back the door, and pointed with pride to two dilapidated wooden chairs, an adornment unknown in other negro quarters. Fanny selected the more substantial, and seated herself.

"For just a minute," she said. "I love Pearlie, and have always wanted to know her mother. You work in the fields, you say."

"Yes'm; since the new master's come," she answered with a trace of sadness in her voice. "Befo' that, it was different."

"Yet all the negroes speak of the new overseer as being more considerate than Culberson," said Fanny. "Don't you find him so?"

"No'm; not by a long chalk," answered the woman. "I is been have to work every day since my baby's been a month old; which is what I is never been did since long befo' my Pearlie was born."

"That, of course, is hard," Fanny admitted, "though it is the custom. And you don't look strong. Perhaps if I speak to the mistress she might get you something easier, and a little better attention. What is your name?"

"Fidelia, ma'am. But please, don't you never mention 'bout it to the missis, though they do say she be most tender-hearted and kind. But I don't wants her never to know nothing 'bout me."

"You don't, Fidelia? Why? You must be mistaken about Miss Betty."

"No'm," Fidelia answered; "but I is been warned. But I thanks you jist the same as if you is been and done it."

"That's very queer of you," said Fanny, "but since it is your wish, I shall, of course, do nothing." She turned to the cooing infant, and pinched its dimpled chin. "What is the baby's name?" she asked.

"Astrodoffogel, ma'am," Fidelia answered. "Isn't it beautiful?"

"The baby, yes; but not the name," Fanny replied. "I think 'Pearl' much the nicer."

"Yes'm, 'Pearl' is nice, too," said the mother. "Her father gave her that, but he was gone befo' my Astrodoffogel was born, so I had to give him a name of myself, and to fend for myself all along."

"Gone?" Fanny questioned eagerly. "Is he dead?"

"No'm, not dead," Fidelia answered. "The master sent him away."

"Impossible," Fanny disclaimed. "The master has not sold one of his slaves since I've been here."

"Sold? No, ma'am. But he was not no slave."

"I don't understand you, Fidelia. What has become of your husband?"

"Husband?" Fidelia exclaimed. "La, Miss Fanny, I is never have none. He wouldn't have wed the likes o' me, and he couldn't ef he would."

"A white man, eh?" Fanny guessed. "No wonder they trample us down, when they find us such simple creatures. Who was he?"

"It is a name," Fidelia replied, "which he charged me I ain't never to repeat. But they all know, and I thought you did."

"And now he has forsaken you?" Fanny said. "It might have been expected."

"He couldn't help it, Miss Fanny," Fidelia defended. "The master drove him away."

"Drove him away?" Fanny re-echoed. "Then it could be no other than the white villain, Johnson Culberson."

She looked pleadingly at Fanny Morgan, without denying her conjecture.

"Ah, now you is done bex with me, Miss Fanny," she said, "and ain't never gwine to be kind to my little Pearl no mo'. Yet, what could I do?"

"I am not condemning you, Fidelia," Fanny replied. "But I am regretting the conditions which prevail among my sisters in servitude till they have become commonplace. You know that in the land of your fathers and mine such things would not have been tolerated. Why should we, in an alien country, sell the only heritage of our freedom we may preserve, the only memory of our beloved country of which the white marauders cannot divest us,—our proud self-respect? When we have lost that, we have lost our entity as a people, lost our personality of race, lost any chance we might have retained of ridding ourselves of the white man's oppression. We have become but a producer of hybrid slaves for our masters, while we ourselves are moral as well as physical slaves, bestowing upon our offspring a curse which multiplies as it descends."

"Ah," Fidelia sighed, "you don't understand. There was a time when I was young and pure and good like you,—I is hardly older now. But I was not happy. I

had to work,—oh, so hard. Then he saw me. He promised me the rest, the comforts, the things my heart craved; but I remembered the words of my mother, who had warned me of her own weakness, and I rejected all he offered. But he persisted. He gave me the hardest and most arduous tasks, and when I toiled till I was ready to drop, he gave me more,—with only one alternative.

"Four times I was bound to the whipping-post on trumped-up charges, and the whipping-post,—ah, Miss Fanny, you don't know what it is! The lash cut into my flesh like knives, and my blood poured to the earth. And still I resisted his demands. And then the fifth time I had reached the limit of my endurance. I had received ten lashes, and felt my life slipping out of my grasp. There were twenty lashes more to come. Twenty more, and—God! what should you have done; with rest, and immunity, and the promise o' happiness within your grasp?"

A tear fell from her eye. She lifted the infant, and pressed its cheek against hers, as if to cool the fire that memory had rekindled.

"I know," Fanny Morgan answered tenderly. "I, too, was subjected to the same plot. I was bound to the whipping-post, and the alternative suggested. I knew it would never end unless I ended it. I struck him on his vile mouth. I knew that meant death, and death meant everlasting immunity from all I feared."

"Ah, you," said Fidelia, "is brave, and of the pure stock of our fore-fathers. I but followed in the footsteps of my mother, for in my veins, too, trickles the water-white blood of our oppressors."

"And you, poor darling," said Fanny, taking the smiling infant in her arms and kissing him tenderly, "how much harder will it be for you! What a heritage fate has bestowed upon you,—the weakness and evasiveness of the negro, the bestial passions and selfish heart-

lessness of the white man, with none of the virtues of either! Will the world attribute your defects to the black or to the white that is in you?''

Astrodoffogel gurgled a delighted answer, and Fanny handed him back to his mother.

''I am not angry with you, Fidelia,'' she said. ''I know what you have suffered,—at least, in part. You chose the easiest, not the only, way. While I pity, I cannot condemn. I shall come to you again, and, for your sufferings, we shall be friends. The Light of my fathers shine upon you!''

''Ah, you is a Zandey,'' said Fidelia. ''But whatever you is, you is my sister, and I thank you.''

''How did you guess I was Zandey?'' Fanny asked.

''There is a Zandey working in the field with us,'' Fidelia answered. ''He always talk 'bout Gumbah, the Great Light o' the Niam-niam country.''

''A Zandey?'' Fanny asked eagerly. ''What kind of a person is he, and how long has he been here?''

''The master bought him with that last bunch o' slaves, some three weeks back,'' Fidelia replied. ''He is a slight, well-built lad, a shade darker than you is, and his name is Sambo. I could have him meet you here some evening, if you'd care to.''

''It will not be necessary, Fidelia, thank you,'' she answered. ''He would hardly be likely to know me, or anyone whom I know.''

In that single minute, a hope had been born and crushed in her heart. She might be able to learn some word of her beloved country,—of her father, of her mother. And then she checked herself. This man was her subject;—had known her only as a princess. Could she now humble herself to appear before him as but one of a throng of negro slaves, not a whit better than himself? True, this was now the lot of both for ever. And yet, pride is but human nature sensitized.

CHAPTER XXX.

FROM THE DISTANT PAST.

Fanny Morgan took a round-about way home. The single reference to her home-land had awakened in her mind thoughts which she preferred to ponder in solitude. It was not yet dark, but the droves of negro slaves had returned from the fields, and she skirted the outer border of their settlement rather than be accosted by any.

It was the first time she had tried to avoid her brothers in servitude, for, though she had no intimate friend among them, she was a general favorite with all, both for the report of her services to her mistress, which had been spread broadcast, and for her attention to any of them who were ill or troubled. But now she sought solitude, deep in communion with those who had been dearest to her.

Out of one of the tiny huts newly erected beside her path, a man came, softly strumming upon a crude, home-made guitar. She paid scant heed either to him or to his music, and he, absorbed in his song, glanced not at her.

As he stood aside to let her pass, she turned an absent glance up to his face. A single word burst involuntarily from her lips,—a cry of joy and of sorrow, of command and of appeal, a question and an answer:

"Renjy!"

The man's eyes met hers. The guitar fell from his hands, his rolling eyeballs seemed to bulge from their sockets, his entire frame quivered uncontrolled, and his brows oozed cold, heavy drops. He sank to the ground in a helpless mass.

"Light of my fathers, shine upon me," he cried in a

tremulous moan, "and protect the Princess Ubaba. It is the spirit of my mistress."

"Rise, Renjy," said Fanny. "It is Ubaba herself. Tell me how you came here."

The man covered his eyes, and continued his prayer. Fanny Morgan shook him back into sanity, and half lifted him to his feet.

"Can you doubt my very self, Renjy?" she asked. "Am I, then, so changed?"

"Is it really you, my mistress,—in the flesh?" Renjy asked, blinking fiercely. "Can it be you? Are you one of—of us?"

"I am one of you, Renjy,—a slave," Fanny replied, regaining her outward calmness. "How did you come to be here? Did harm come to—him? You did not return."

The association of his last mission for his mistress with his present questioner seemed to convince Renjy that it was really Ubaba. Princess or ghost, it was meet that he should give some account of his sacred trust.

"No harm could befall him, my lady," he answered, "or I should not have lived to tell of it. I took him to the coast, and waited with him till he found a ship that would take him to his country. Then I was free, according to the word of my mistress."

"And you have not seen him since,—nor heard of him?"

"Neither, my lady. But if this is really you, how come you here?"

"It is a long story," she answered, "which I shall tell you when we have more time. Briefly, I was kidnapped by Mabode savages while on my way from the sacred temple, and sold into slavery. But tell me of yourself. How came you to this land?"

As she spoke, she moved towards a fallen log that lay beside the path, and seated herself. The young man

followed at a respectful distance, and remained standing before her.

"Sit beside me, Renjy," she invited, "and tell me all. I am no longer your mistress; may I not be your sister?"

Renjy sat down on the ground before her,—a posture he might well have assumed in distant Kubanda. She waited for him to answer, but he remained silent, with eyes that still seemed to doubt whether or not they confronted a being of flesh and blood.

"Won't you tell me," she repeated, "how you come to be in the white man's country?"

"Oh, that, my lady? That was nothing," he answered, chuckling as if with some pleasant memory. "I played the game in Zandey style, and lost. I might have won."

"What game, Renjy? I do not understand."

"You see, my lady," Renjy answered, "after I left the coast on my return to Bakinji, I stopped in the Ibo country. There I met a maiden who, begging my lady's pardon, might grace the mbanga of a prince. She was the daughter of a chief, and had been promised in marriage to the son of a neighboring chieftain; but the maiden loved me, and we decided on a secret flight to Kubanda.

"Father and lover soon discovered the elopement, and followed hard on our heels. For ten days we evaded them, but when we were both on the verge of exhaustion from weariness and privations, we were overtaken. My darling was dragged from my arms, and I was sold to the slavers."

"I am sorry, Renjy," the girl replied. "Had I not sent you to the coast, this would never have happened."

"Spare yourself, my lady," said Renjy. "Your mission had nothing to do with it. The brave youths of Kubanda have ever sought their brides afar, and I had long resolved to seek a wife among the Ibo. Besides, does it not seem the working of Gumbah that you and

I should meet in this distant country? Would it not seem as if he intended me to serve you even here?''

To the fatalistic mind of Fanny Morgan, the indeed remarkable coincidence seemed common-place. She answered with an impatient sigh,

''Even the arms of the mighty Ntikkigama could avail me little here, Renjy; and you can do nothing. The only aid Ubaba expects will come when the Almighty Gumbah shall give her lasting sleep.''

''You have not, I trust, my mistress, suffered severely at the hands of the white barbarians?'' Renjy asked with deep concern.

''Save only in spirit, Renjy, I have suffered less than many another,'' the girl replied. ''My mistress is very kind to me, and has promised me my freedom.''

''You are to be freed, my lady?''

''Freedom?'' She laughed bitterly. ''What can freedom mean to me—here? Can they give me back the freedom that they stole? Can they give me back the years of happy childhood that are gone? Will they give me back the woods, the birds, the trees, the waters of beloved Kubanda? Will they nestle me once more in the bosom of Alali, and wrap around me the strong arms of Ntikkigama?''

''Yet, my lady,'' Renjy consoled, ''if you are set free, with the governor's seal, it may be possible for you to return to our country.''

''It cannot be, dear Renjy,'' she replied. ''I have enquired into it, and it is impossible. Only the wealthy can go from here to England, whence the ships to our shores proceed; and did I even get there, I should not be half-way to our home. Should I even reach the Slave Coasts, it would be but to become once more a captive to the greed of the slavers.''

''But, my mistress,'' said Renjy, ''could you reach England, it might be possible to find the white man whom you had befriended in Kubanda, and he——''

"Speak not of him, Renjy," she answered with a sparkle in her eyes, though the dusky hue of her cheeks no less than the waning twilight hid the flush that was its natural concomitant. "Could I now go to him and sue for aid,—I, who was then the Princess of Kubanda?" She paused to collect her overmastering feelings. "Renjy," she continued in a gentler tone, "only you know the heart of your mistress. You have my trust."

She rose from the log, and stretched out her hand in the English fashion.

"Renjy, we shall meet often, and I shall be your sister. The Princess Ubaba is dead. My name is Fanny Morgan."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN QUEST OF REVENGE.

Across the green, close-cropped lawn, like flutters of sun-kissed gold, streaked the sportive dart of the yellow-winged sparrow. From the tall hickory, clothed in the verdure of spring, a robin chirped querulously, till her mate fluttered back from beneath the clusters of jasmine and wistaria to a perch beside her, and pecked her shrewish head. The hum of bees silenced the gentle rustling of the leaves, and above the distant tree-tops rose the warble of the mocking-bird.

The garden, too, spoke springtime. Lilies and dahlias, roses, chrysanthemums and daisies, sun-flowers, geraniums and pansies, with bursting buds, expanded petals or slowly drooping heads, rose everywhere in harmonious contrast, with the wild enchantery of an Eastern garden, emitting a perfumery science has failed to imitate.

The form of Eleanor Crawford, agile for all its increasing weight, bounded up the stairs.

"Betty," she called gleefully, "they are coming. I can see the boat."

Beatrice Innisdale drew a light shawl from the back of a chair, and, throwing it over her shoulders, joined her friend. At the door she paused, drew back, and, taking a bottle of scented water from a table, passed it to Miss Crawford.

"Cool your cheeks," she said with a smile; "you are as red as a basket of cranberries."

"I know, Bet," Eleanor replied, hastily applying the remedy. "I can't help it;—I'm so excited."

"You must be, dear," Beatrice replied, "after such

a long wait. I am almost as eager as you are. Come, we'll go down to the pier.''

Arm in arm, the two girls descended the stairs, and crossed the lawn. Beatrice walked without a limp, so completely had nature and a hardy constitution repaired her injured leg during the long winter months. Her form was still thin, but she had never been fleshy; her cheeks had recovered their accustomed tint, and the dreamy, far-away look her eyes had retained as the sole reminder of her weeks of hardship, had been banished on this long-anticipated day when her beloved brother would return from Oxford.

Eleanor, restless as a caged panther, hurried her towards the river.

''At last, eh, Bet? It seemed so long to wait.''

''You are a brave girl, Nell,'' Beatrice replied. ''I could not have let my lover go for four long years.''

''It was hard,'' Eleanor admitted, ''but it was best for Ollie, and I would not stand in his way. Besides, it's worth all my waiting to meet him now. Ah, here they come. There they are. That's Ollie on the deck, and that must be Major Pressley beside him. Look; they see us: they are waving. Oh, Bet!——''

She laughed semi-hysterically, and the two girls waved their tiny kerchiefs frantically, answered from the deck of the schooner. Colonel Innisdale, who had hurried down in their wake, joined in the ovation, waving his three-cornered beaver as feverishly as the girls their scraps of cambric.

In a few minutes the boat was brought alongside the wharf, and before the first rope could be securely fastened, Oliver Innisdale sprang ashore. With the strides of an Oxford half-back, he reached his sister's side, the Englishman but a pace behind. For a second he pressed her to his bosom, kissing her on both cheeks.

''Major Pressley, my sister,'' he said with a curt bow;

then, in wilful self-mortification leaving the greatest gratification for the last, turned towards his father.

It has ever been said that Virginian hospitality was unstudied, and lacked formality. Miss Innisdale held out her hand to the stranger, and her eyes smiled a welcome no language could express, as she said simply,

"Major Pressley, you are welcome to Virginia."

The Englishman sank slowly till the knee of his red velvet breeches touched the earth. His head continued its gentle descent till his lips met the hand he still held firmly. Then, as slowly, he arose.

"I thank you for the assurance, Miss Innisdale," he answered. "None other could tender it so graciously."

Oliver had by this flitted from his father's side to that of his sweetheart, yet neither found word to welcome the other. He took her outstretched hand, and bent his lips to it, then still stood holding it, each smiling silently, sheepishly at the other.

As Pressley turned from Miss Innisdale, the colonel gripped his hand warmly.

"Arthur Huntington Pressley," he said with rugged, honest geniality, "can need no introduction in the house of Matthew Innisdale, and no assurance of welcome. Boy, your father was my dearest friend. How is the old gray-head?"

"Passing fine, Colonel, and ever mindful of you," Pressley answered suavely, "though the moors of Oxfordshire do not seem to carry the rejuvenescent vitality of the fresh Virginian forests. He commits me with a thousand assurances of his devotion,—and to you, also, Miss Innisdale."

Then, quickly imbibing the contagious spontaneity of Virginian society, he moved towards the silent, unparted lovers.

"Permit me, Innisdale," he said. "Miss Crawford, it has been the dream of countless anxious nights to greet you. I dare not meet you as a stranger."

He kissed her hand in a salutation as courtly as that he had tendered to Miss Innisdale. Then the genial colonel took command.

"This way to the pantry, boys," he called. "You've had a long, dry voyage;—I know how dry salt water is. The larder of Innismount is not yet empty."

The party moved off towards the mansion, Beatrice, with her father on one arm and the Englishman on the other, leading the way, while the young lovers, who had at last found their tongues, lingered in the rear.

The repast which lay awaiting the travellers under the supervision of Uncle Alec and his bride, had been provided with that profusion which ever marked the Virginian mansion, and the superb cooking of Aunt 'Lizbeth, no less than the faultless service of the aged butler, tempted the appetites of the diners. The conversation was common-place and informal, and the Englishman had ample time to study his surroundings, and, in turn, to be studied by those who had not seen him before.

He was a man of perhaps thirty, though the heavy tan on his open features might have hidden another year or two. His keen, honest eyes seemed to hold those upon whom it rested, and his voice had a strong, silvery crispness, as if made to command; yet when it sank lower, it could be pleading and tender as a woman's.

Slightly above the average in height, his firm, well-proportioned figure was rounded out by carefully developed muscles, without an ounce of useless fat. He gave the impression of uncommon physical endurance, strong determination, and an honest, open heart.

"I had been hoping," said Colonel Innisdale, who kept the conversation running from topic to topic in his own hurried manner, "that your father might have been induced to take the trip out with you, but I could not influence him."

"Father thinks he is too old for any such long voyage,"

Pressley replied. "Besides, you know, Colonel, he has not been quite himself for some years."

"So I heard," nodded the colonel. "He wrote me of his loss. Still, his remaining to brood over the spot only makes the matter worse."

"So his friends have told him," Pressley returned, "but father is not to be influenced. Even an extended trip to London or the continent would be beneficial."

"I understand his position," said Innisdale with an eye that seemed to look back into his own past. "When two have lived together so long and happily, separation comes hard."

"True, Colonel. Yet it was not the death of my mother, sad as that must have been to him, that affected father most. It was the cowardly murder of my brother that broke the hearts of both."

"Murder?" gasped Innisdale. "I understood your brother was shot in a duel."

Pressley did not reply immediately. The pause gave him time almost completely to eliminate the bitterness from his voice. When he spoke, it was with a pathetic softness and a bare trace of emotion.

"Colonel Innisdale," he said, "you are my father's friend, and a man of honor. The affair had a determining influence in my visiting America at this time, and I shall give you the facts.

"My brother, insulted by one he thought a gentleman, was the challenger, and the other, reputed one of the best swordsmen in Europe, nevertheless selected pistols as the weapons. They met at the appointed spot early one morning, accompanied by their seconds and a surgeon. Back to back they stood, fifteen paces apart. The surgeon was to count three, then the men were to turn and fire. That is according to the rules of honor.

"All was ready. 'One' the referee counted, and before the word had died on his lips, there was the crack of a

pistol, and my brother fell with a bullet that had passed between his shoulder blades and through his lung.''

''A dastardly and treacherous act,'' cried Innisdale in horror. ''Has an Englishman fallen so low? Who was the coward?''

''Franklyn Everleigh,'' Pressley answered, ''younger son of Lord Caulfield.''

''I knew the old lord in his younger days,'' said Innisdale. ''I did not think it was in the Everleigh blood.''

''Young Everleigh fled,'' the Englishman continued, ''and his father did not survive the disgrace. His elder son, who succeeded to the title, is prematurely aged, and has never taken his seat in the House.''

''And the younger?'' Innisdale asked.

''I was abroad at the time,'' said Pressley, ''and when I returned to England and learned the facts, I vowed to avenge my brother's death. I sought trace of Everleigh through England and Scotland, and at length obtained information which led me to believe that he is at present in Virginia. It is his trail that I still follow.''

Miss Innisdale, who had been an attentive listener, for the first time interrupted.

''Major Pressley,'' she said in her soft, persuasive tone, ''don't you think this butchery of Englishmen by Englishmen, this illusive thirst for blood under the name of vengeance, a lamentable thing? You would pursue young Everleigh and have his blood. Do you believe that single passing pang of pain in any way comparable with the suffering your victim now endures, housed with his own cowardly conscience, driven from home and friends, a nameless outcast among strangers, with the mark of Cain branded on his heart?''

''Yet, Miss Innisdale,'' Pressley answered with deference, ''some men are utterly devoid of a working conscience, and such I believe Everleigh to be. Besides, as Colonel Innisdale will tell you, there is a certain code

of honor prescribed, from which I cannot deviate without incurring scorn. Remember, my brother's death has made me my father's heir."

"I understand all that," Beatrice answered. "And where honor,—real honor,—is concerned, I could bid you God's speed. But this thirst for vengeance can only be a perversion of honor."

"I do not believe that Everleigh is in Virginia," said Innisdale, interrupting the turn which the conversation had taken, lest his daughter's words should offend the stranger. "I know all the respectable families in the colony, and I am sure the young man is not among them."

"He would hardly be living under his own name," said Pressley, "and it is only on a description of him that I must depend. I remember him well, and shall not be deceived if we ever meet. He must now be about thirty-five. He would be a couple of inches taller than I am, and a good deal heavier, though, with his long military training, he mightn't show it. His hair is black, and there is a habitual fierceness in the uncertain coloring of his eyes. Nevertheless, his features are considered handsome, and in London he is still spoken of as having been 'a kind of a devil with women.'"

A shadow darted across the brows of Miss Innisdale, and she shot a quick glance at her father. The colonel was, however, too busy trying to put the abstract description into concrete form to notice her, and her momentary hesitation passed.

"Forget your enmity, Major Pressley," she said cheerily. "Doesn't this glorious sunshine make you feel like loving your deadliest foe? How like you our Virginian vintage?"

She pointed to his glass, which he had so long neglected, and lifted her own.

Pressley raised his glass to her, then emptied it.

"It is excellent liquor," he answered, smiling, "and

Virginia is indeed a land of surprises. I should have sworn the grapes from which this wine was made had grown on the banks of the Garonne.''

''And you wouldn't be wrong,'' Beatrice replied, laughing merrily in her turn. ''Yet, we do have a vintage of our own. Alec, let Major Pressley have a glass of our home-made wine.''

Only the choicest imported liquors had, however, been brought in for the visitor, and the butler found it necessary to summon one of the servants to bring the native wine. In another instant, Fanny Morgan entered with the desired beverage.

''Bring it here, Fanny,'' Miss Innisdale called as the girl approached the aged butler. ''Fill up Major Pressley's glass.''

Pressley glanced up at the new servitor, and, at the same instant, the bottle, slipping through the girl's fingers, crashed to the floor.

Colonel Innisdale darted around with an angry growl.

''You bungling——''

He did not finish the invective, but whether out of respect to the stranger, from sympathy for the offender, or in answer to his daughter's reproachful eyes, was not clear. The girl made no apology. Her face was averted as she hastily gathered up the fragments of glass, then silently she left the room. A minute later another bottle of home-made wine was brought in, but by another servant.

Pressley commended the liquor, and, dinner completed, Beatrice suggested a walk over the grounds. Oliver and his sweetheart readily assented, and the four moved away.

They were descending the short flight of stairs that led from the wide verandah, when Miss Innisdale's sharp eyes detected the figure of Fanny Morgan crouched behind the oleanders at one angle of the house. Tearing

herself from her companions, she hurried towards the girl.

"Why, what's the matter, Fanny?" she asked eagerly, noting the girl's drooping head. "Are you ill?"

Slowly the head rose towards her, and in eyes and voice that, through all their vicissitudes together, had never evinced emotion, Beatrice detected a tear.

"No, Miss Betty, I'm not ill."

"Nonsense, child." Beatrice laughed encouragingly. "Are you fretting about that bottle of cheap wine? Forget it, dear. I shouldn't let anyone scold you if you had broken a hundred bottles of the best French. You're worth more than that to me."

"Thank you, Miss Betty," the girl answered. "It's very kind of you."

"There now. Run into the house, and help Aunt 'Lizbeth straighten things. Major and Mrs. Crawford are to be here for supper, with a few other friends."

She moved off slowly to rejoin her companions, but the girl's call halted her.

"Miss Betty, does the white woman keep her word?"

"Of course she does, Fanny," Beatrice answered. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing, ma'am. Only, now that your brother and his friends are here, they may wish to hear of your adventures in the mountains, and you might forget and mention the things I told you."

"I shall not forget, Fanny. I promised you not to repeat your story till you say I may. The white woman keeps her word."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A GLOOMY OUTLOOK.

The next few weeks were gay days at Innismount. The best families in three counties hastened to welcome Oliver, and to invite the English stranger to share their hospitality. Long rides over the rugged country roads, picnic parties up the brown, sluggish river, lazy strolls through the woods, and two fox-hunts filled up the days, while the nights were devoted to parties, dinners, balls and receptions in unending sequence.

The complicated problems of Colonial government, centring principally around Boston, but affecting the entire Atlantic sea-board of the American continent, kept Colonel Innisdale at Williamsburg except on special occasions; while the engrossment of Eleanor and Oliver in each other threw almost the entire entertainment of Pressley upon Miss Innisdale.

Actuated only by a desire to maintain the reputation for hospitality which the colonial plantations had won, the girl undertook the task whole-heartedly; and the keen perception and ready adaptability of the Englishman soon made the duty doubly pleasurable. Pressley, accustomed to the studied conventionality then practised among the beauties of England, was struck by the frank informality of his hostess, and accepted the spontaneity of her character with the eclât of a school-boy. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a short time a friendship should have ripened between the two as idyllic as it was real.

It would be unjust to Miss Innisdale to assume that such a condition was the natural result of their enforced association. It was by slow degrees, despite the short-

ness of time, that she read into the inner mind of her companion, saw his lofty ideals, his unfailing love for justice, his tenacity to principle, his unaffected simplicity of heart. These were qualities that warmed her heart towards him.

Not that their thoughts often ran in the same channels, nor even that their opinions always agreed. This was practically impossible, considering that the one had been born and bred on a Virginian plantation, her childhood companions negro slaves, her friends in maidenhood the half-dozen youths of her age within a twenty-mile radius, and her knowledge of city life gathered from a few business visits to Williamsburg, then a village of some fifty houses; while the other had romped with future dukes and earls, had danced with bejewelled dames and spangled countesses, was as much at home in the piazzas of Rome as in the mansions of Whitehall or Picadilly, and had travelled over three-quarters of the globe. And, where their opinions differed, they often had spirited debates; for the argument was an indigenous product of the free Virginian soil. But, whether or not they failed to convince each other, the invariable outcome of the discussion was a clearer understanding and a higher opinion each of the other.

On the other hand, Colonel Innisdale, on the infrequent occasions when he was permitted to dine at home, plied the stranger with questions bearing on the matter nearest to his heart.

"What are the people of England doing with regard to the high-handed actions of North in relation to the American colonies?" he asked at the first opportunity.

"To be perfectly frank, Colonel Innisdale," Pressley answered, "the people of England are doing nothing. They are not aware of the pass to which matters have come."

"So?" sighed the colonel. "The people of Lisbon, too, slept on the eve of the earthquake."

"True, Colonel; yet in neither case are the bulk of the people entirely to blame for their want of foresight," Pressley replied. "For some dozen years these underground rumblings have sounded from the Americas, but the government have ever had enough sense to back down in time to prevent the cataclysm. Those who should naturally interest themselves in the matter are too busy buying and selling privileges: the ordinary Englishman may be excused if he snores in peace after having paid his rent, and washed down his bacon with a copious draught of home-brewed ale, refusing to be scared by sounds which do not alarm his betters."

"You think, then, that Lord North will eventually advise His Majesty to rescind his position?" Innisdale asked.

"It is the only logical assumption," Pressley answered thoughtfully, "yet it seems that the government have now gone too far to withdraw with honor. But what other course is possible? Certainly the people of England would never countenance a war upon their brothers in America. The Minister for War has pointed out the impracticability, as well as the uselessness, of sending troops to America. Grafton himself has admitted that collecting the tea-tax costs a hundred times as much as it could possibly bring. Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, a man who holds the confidence and esteem of every Englishman at home or abroad, is unalterably opposed to force. Sir Thomas Pownall, who knows Massachusetts better than any other man in parliament, has shown that all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot compel the people of Boston to drink taxed tea. What, then, can North do but revise his stand?"

"And what of the opposition?" exclaimed the colonel. "Are there no whigs in England?"

"There is one man in England who could lead the opposition to success," Pressley replied. "Propped up

in an invalid's chair, his dimming eyes behold the mighty empire he had built in three continents tottering to the mischievous experiments of the unthinking gang at Westminster. What the hate of his king, the jealousy of his rivals, and the swords of his enemies could not accomplish, disease and age have done for William Pitt.''

''But Rockingham leads the party, doesn't he?'' Innisdale enquired.

''The mantle of Pitt does not fit Rockingham,'' said Pressley. ''His lordship certainly does his humble best, but he has not the grasp, the foresight, nor the dynamic personality of the great empire-builder.''

''Burke, then,'' the colonel suggested. ''Much was expected of him.''

''Edmund Burke,'' Pressley answered, ''would seem to be the natural leader of the opposition, and it is not impossible that he could recover for his party some of the spirit which bore Chatham along. But he is too sensitive of his own obscurity of birth, and will not attempt to lead noblemen who, should he make the experiment, might be willing to follow. Burke, undoubtedly, has the best grasp of the situation, the clearest vision, and the least to lose by opposing the king. If he has one defect, it is that he is too polished an orator to be a convincing debater.''

''You call that a defect, Pressley?'' gasped the colonel. ''It was the oratory of William Pitt that carried him through parliament.''

''True, Colonel. But the oratory of Burke soothes the ear where the words of Pitt jar the nerves. At Oxford or Cambridge, Burke would, doubtless, be considered the finer of the two; but the common rabble would jump up to a man at Pitt's voice, while trying in vain to comprehend Burke's meaning. The great leaders of the world were men who could say sharp, pointed things; not those who could turn out carefully-fabricated metaphors and euphonious similes. From Alexander the

Great to our own Noll, not a world-maker was a polished orator; and from Demosthenes to Edmund Burke, no polished orator has accomplished anything but just talk.''

''You forget Cæsar, Major Pressley,'' said Beatrice, who had till now been a silent listener. ''There you have the perfect combination.''

''I beg your pardon, Miss Innisdale,'' Pressley replied, ''I should not consider Cæsar a polished orator. The old Roman was somewhat after the order of Lord Chatham,—concise and to the point.''

''We shall reserve that as one of the topics for our daily quarrels,'' Beatrice laughed. ''At present I must not disturb you. Who else is there to whom the colonists may cry?''

''There is no leader to oppose North and the king,'' said Pressley. ''Burke is the best bet, but for his diffidence. Lord George Germaine, who has been mentioned several times, is half-hearted,—neither whig nor tory. Yet, in the bulk of the party are many honest men who understand the colonists' claim, and hold out on their behalf,—Camden, Wilkes, Glynne, Phipps,—indeed, all who have nothing to lose by offending the sovereign. Yet their humbler voices cannot reach the ears of His Majesty, who, the reports say, is personally bent on the humiliation of the colonists, as much to rebuke and repudiate the policy of Pitt as to gratify his own vanity and justify his stand. If an amicable settlement is to be reached, either the king and North must completely reverse every attitude they have taken, or else the colonists must meekly submit to every indignity, and forever relinquish every claim to British freedom.''

''Then it means the shedding of blood,'' groaned Innisdale, ''of British blood by British swords. Alas that I should live to see the day when Virginia, the most loyal of the colonies, should draw sword to oppose the officers of her own sovereign! But there is no alternative. We cannot stand by and see Massachusetts whipped like

a naughty child when we are guilty of the same crimes as she, and deserve whatever castigation she merits.''

''Is that the decision of the burgesses?'' Pressley asked.

''It is the decision of the burgesses,'' Innisdale replied. ''We have voted to support Massachusetts unreservedly in her stand against injustice.''

''That is a wise step,'' said the Englishman. ''His Majesty can hardly proceed in his heedless policy when he understands that all his American subjects are united in opposition, and that he has not the support of the British workingman.''

''Yet you say the ordinary Englishman is not interested in the colonies, and does not care what happens to them.''

''I beg your pardon, Colonel,'' Pressley corrected. ''What I said was that they are not awake to the facts. How could they be? Very few of them have correspondents in the colonies to keep them posted, and even these receive their year-old letters with the chief portions deleted by the king's minions, if, indeed, the letters are ever delivered. The newspapers barely hint at the subject, and, generally, in parables that are unintelligible except to the most erudite. The efforts of Dr. Franklyn, it is true, have shed some little light on the subject, but North and his associates have in every way tried to discredit his story. Yet, wherever the truth is fully known, the English workingman is whole-heartedly in sympathy with his colonial brothers. The action of Virginia may awaken England, and North be forced to heed its protest.''

''God grant it be so,'' sighed Innisdale. ''Against the Frenchman or the Indian, the Britisher, be he in England or in the colonies, has ever a ready sword; but against his own countrymen—— God grant that the day dawn not!''

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AWAKE TO LOVE.

"Hang it, Pressley! What are you trying to do? Throw off?"

"No, Colonel; honest, I'm not. But you seem to be at your best this evening."

Colonel Innisdale chuckled heartily at his success.

He had arrived from Williamsburg that evening, had hurried through supper, and had challenged the young Englishman to an evening of checkers. It was a game of which he was exceedingly fond, and when he discovered that his visitor was a player of no mean ability, he grasped at every opportunity to indulge in his favorite pastime.

Three times before, they had contended; and on each occasion they had about broken even: yet, here it was, the colonel had won the third successive game.

The draughts were rearranged for the fourth. Rousing himself to his danger, Pressley secured a draw, but Innisdale swept the board in the fifth.

"Call it an evening," said the colonel magnanimously. "You are not at your best to-night. Still, if you think you can have your revenge——"

"I am, indeed, no match for you to-night, Colonel," Pressley admitted. "But I can stand a deal more punishment, if you care to proceed."

"Another time," Innisdale replied. "It is a game which requires all your attention, and I can see that something else is troubling you. If it is a matter in which I——"

Pressley started violently, and a surge of blood dyed his features a deeper tan.

"No,—nothing, Colonel," he stammered hastily. "I —I had nothing in mind but the game."

"I beg your pardon, Major," said Innisdale with a touch of the hasty haughtiness that had almost become habitual with him in spite of his better nature. "I meant you no offence."

The tinge of temper was not lost to the young man, and he knew that he had betrayed himself. Frankness seemed the only remedy.

"I am sorry I said that, Colonel," he answered, "because I do have something in mind, and something that I wished to say to you at a fitting time; but you took me off my guard. I'm very sorry."

"Don't mention it, boy," said the honest colonel good-naturedly. "I've caught myself doing the same thing sometimes,—saying something in a hurry, and regretting it for hours afterwards. The present time is ever the most fitting, and I am always at your service."

"Yet, Colonel," said Pressley with a forced smile, "with such a bad beginning, it is difficult to proceed. You have known me only a couple of months, and during that period, you have been forced to spend most of your time away from home. But you were my father's friend, and you know what the name of Pressley means."

"Clean, boy; clean all through," answered Innisdale encouragingly. "You need no better guaranty, for there is none."

"I thank you, Colonel," Pressley replied, recovering his accustomed confidence. "The days I have spent at Innismount have been the happiest of my life, and for this I am wholly indebted to the amiability and thoughtfulness of Miss Innisdale."

"She is a good girl, Pressley; a wonderful girl," said Innisdale effusively. "There is no better in all Virginia, if it is her father who says it."

"I have realized it, Colonel," the young man answered, "and I have realized, too, that my own happiness is

inseparably wound up in her. May I have your permission to speak to her on the subject?''

''Why, Pressley, why, confound it, I——''

Innisdale bit off the incoherent succession of words that had been startled from him. For a long minute he sat mute, looking steadily at the young man with filmed eyes that did not see him, that seemed to delve back into distant years and other scenes. At length he woke up.

''Hang it, boy; I'm a selfish old man now,'' he said with deep emotion, ''and it had ever been my hope that Betty should never be taken from my arms till she had laid me in my coffin. But I must not stand in the way of my child's happiness. I suppose it must some day come to this; and if it must, I could wish her no better than the son of Alexander Pressley.''

''I thank you for your confidence, Colonel,'' Pressley replied. ''You shall never think it was misplaced.''

''Have you spoken of the matter to my daughter?'' Innisdale asked.

''On my honor, Colonel, I dared not so much as hint my feelings to her till I had learnt your will,'' said Pressley, ''and I cannot believe she has guessed my thoughts.''

''Then the matter is for you two to decide. I shall not urge her heart. Be kind to her, Pressley. She is tender as a bud, and clinging as a vine, but she is proud as a queen,—the image of her darling mother.—Run away now, boy. You have taken all I had. Leave an old man the dreams you have awakened.''

Pressley slid from the room, his head and heart awhirl with expectancy, leaving the old man with dreamy eyes fixed on the vacant wall.

He glanced at the clock as he passed through the long hall. It was barely eight. From the distant parlor came the sounds of gay chatter and laughter, interrupted at

intervals by the disconnected strumming of a harp. He hastened in that direction.

"Ah, Major Pressley, I'm so glad you have come," cried Beatrice in unaffected delight as he entered. "Those two"—she pointed an accusing finger at Miss Crawford and Oliver—"have been so engrossed in each other that I have been left severely alone with this old harp, which I'm afraid to play lest I disturb them."

"Now, Betty," Eleanor contradicted laughingly, "you know that is not so. Why, Major Pressley, she monopolized Ollie entirely, and I was hardly able to get in a word edgewise."

"Three is always an unsatisfactory number for a party," Pressley replied. "That's why I ran away from the colonel so early. But I'm surprised that you sit cooped up in the house on an evening like this. The moon casts a beam that rivals daylight, a million stars strive to assist her, and the garden wafts in an invitation I cannot decline. Shall we accept?"

Beatrice laid down her harp, and slipped her arm into his. They tripped lightly down the stairs, and reached the garden gate. Behind them, Eleanor followed on Oliver's arm.

"The garden or the lawn?" Beatrice asked, looking up for direction.

"The garden, please, if it's all the same to you," he answered. "I never could resist the fragrance of the night-blooming jasmine."

He found a seat for her in one of the garden benches, already damp with dew, and sank beside her. She caught a cluster of rose-buds in her hand, and pressed it gently to her lips, without breaking the stem.

"You love roses," he said.

"I love flowers, and trees, and nature," she answered, —"all that is pretty and sweet and good."

"That is selfish," he chided tenderly. "Can't you love what is not like you?"

She turned large, wondering eyes up to him. In the soft moonlight, she looked ineffably sweet,—her rich, black hair, blacker in the shade, fanned by a stray flutter of air, her cheeks laved by a light that threw out their loveliest tint, her eyes sparkling with animated interest.

"Don't you love them too?" she asked.

"I do," he answered, as he tried to stifle his labored breathing. "I love them all, but more than them, I love you."

"That's very nice of you, Major Pressley," she replied, laughing. "You do say pretty things."

Her words came glibly, innocently, as from a prattling babe. Pressley knew she did not understand, did not realize, what he meant. He took her hand in his.

"Miss Innisdale," he said, "I have your father's permission to tell you that you are all the world to me; that you have made my life inexpressibly happy, and that I want you to share that happiness with me. I love you, dear, as only one man can ever love you; as I can love no other. Can you, too, care for me?"

She had been gazing up into his face in childlike innocence. Suddenly the smile died out of her eyes, and a troubled look darted across her brows. Her hand slid out of his, but it was an involuntary movement.

"Can you care for me, dearest?" he bent low to whisper as she remained silent. "I shall fill up your life with sunshine, and roses, and love. We shall be two happy children together, and our only rivalry will be to see which can make the other happier."

She seemed to shudder slightly, but still she did not speak. His arm moved round her waist, and drew her nearer up to him. She offered no protest. He bent his eyes to the level of her drooping lids.

"Sweetheart, say you can care. Tell me you will be mine, and make my paradise complete. My soul has

hungered for you, dear, since first we met. Now I know I cannot live without you."

Her head fell gently against his bosom to his touch. Her eyes closed, and her breath hissed audibly.

"I shall live only for you, darling," his voice continued tremulously, "and in your hands I shall be whatever you may wish. No sorrow will ever touch your fair brow, sweet; no unhappiness mar your life. Give me the right to smooth a path for you, to clasp you to my heart and shield you from the world. My love, say you'll be mine."

She felt the quick and rhythmic pulsing of his bosom, cradling her to rest. A sharp pang, as of anguish, rent her heart. She felt her life slipping out of her grasp,—away, away. She clutched agonizingly at it. It was gone. Something clogged her throat: she grasped for breath, and a sigh slipped from her lips. For, in that moment love was born;—born with a rending, torturous pang of anguish that left her unutterably happy.

Her eyes rose slowly up to his,—eyes that were no longer proud and haughty, but humbled and subdued and helpless.

He read their meek submission, their pleading tenderness. His head descended towards her. Their lips met. He clasped her to his heart. . . .

The trite inanities which lovers say seem commonplace when reproduced. The things which Eve whispered to Adam under the old apple tree are the very things Cleopatra murmured to Anthony on the banks of the Nile, and Mary Smith muttered to John Jones out by the back gate. Yet each has contrived to utter them with an originality that made them entirely hers; and now, as Beatrice repeated the age-old thoughts and asked the age-old questions, she was fully conscious that no woman before her in all the world had ever felt the happiness she experienced, or spoken the words she

whispered up to him. And in this, she was not mistaken.

It was a painful reminder that there was another world than theirs when, from behind a distant rose-bush, Oliver's discordant call awakened them.

"Pressley,—it's after eleven, and Nell feels chilly. I'm taking her into the house."

Beatrice rose at her lover's touch, a lioness tamed, an antelope domesticated. She must have walked up the stairs, for next day she could not remember having been carried. But she could remember that, at the door to her room, a warm lip had been pressed to hers, and all the windows of heaven had been opened, and a million choirs of angels had simultaneously struck their golden harps with the most enchanting melody that mortal ever heard,—and then she had found herself in bed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE END OF A PERFECT DAY.

It was a cruel coincidence that Pressley had promised to spend the following day in the woods with Oliver and three other young men, shooting grouse and partridge and wild turkey. His companions arrived early, and when, for the first time that day, he met Beatrice at the breakfast table, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks almost as florid as Eleanor's, he could only smile happily at her, and press her hand.

She accompanied him to the door, and to his mount, when the meal was ended, and pinned upon his coat the loveliest carnation her garden afforded. And when again he pressed her hand, he was bold enough to raise it to his lips.

She watched him till his disappearing figure was lost to view, then, with a sigh that belied her laughing eyes, she re-entered the house.

Colonel Innisdale had left for Williamsburg with the dawn; Miss Crawford departed immediately after breakfast, and Beatrice found the day long and lonely. She felt unusually restless, and flitted about the house with purposeless animation, now rearranging the parlor or the dining-room, now darting into the garden to fill a vase with the loveliest blossoms, now pausing to glance at the hands of the clock that did not seem to move, now bustling into the kitchen to give some new instruction or countermand an earlier one. But Aunt 'Lizbeth seemed to divine the symptoms, for when her mistress darted out again, she turned a knowing wink towards her aged spouse, and Alec winked back with a grin that threatened to engulf his ears; whereupon the honest old

mammy, as she buried her ebon hands to the elbows in white flour, murmured piously,

"God bless 'er, sweet soul, an' keep 'er happy."

Beatrice at length re-ascended to her room, and summoned Fanny Morgan to her. There, with her favored maid, she spent several hours, trying on various dresses and making slight alterations in some of them, the while chattering as gaily as a sparrow.

"What is the matter, Fanny?" she asked suddenly. "You are so sad and silent."

"Sorry you find me so, my lady," the girl answered. "Indeed, I am not sad."

"Poor child," said the mistress. "I know I have neglected you terribly these few weeks, but I have been so busy entertaining our friends and being entertained, that it could hardly be helped. I have not forgotten you."

"It is very kind of you to remember me, Miss Betty," Fanny replied. "Of course, your first duty lies to your friends."

"I am not so ungrateful as to believe that, child," Beatrice retorted with sparkling eyes. "No friend will ever cause me to forget that but for you and what you suffered, my bones would long ago have been laid beneath the sod of an Indian village. And that reminds me, Fanny. Father said he asked the governor about that license for your freedom, and received an assurance that it should soon be ready."

"You are, indeed, very thoughtful, my mistress," said the girl. "From my heart I thank you, though freedom now can mean so little to me."

"I know, dear," Miss Innisdale answered tenderly. "Yet it is the best that can be done under the circumstances. I shall do whatever I can for you, Fanny," she continued consolingly, "and perhaps if you could settle down and try to forget the past, you could yet be happy. I have been thinking, too, of asking Miss Craw-

ford to let Walter come over and spend another day with you. You enjoy his company, don't you?''

''I do, Miss Betty,'' she replied without enthusiasm.

''And perhaps in time you could learn to care for him. It would lessen your sorrows appreciably if you had some strong man's arm on which to lean, and Walter is a splendid fellow.''

''I shall never care for him that way, Miss Betty,'' she answered; ''nor for anyone else.''

Miss Innisdale did not reply at once.

''Perhaps you are right, Fanny,'' she said at length, ''and I can understand you. If I had loved once, I do not believe I, either, could love another. A woman has but one heart to give, and when it has been truly given, it can never be recalled. But whatever happens, dear, you must remain with me.''

''I shall be very happy if you'll let me, Miss Betty. There is none other in all Virginia who cares for me.''

''And I shall try to have you with me more, child. Happily, the round of balls and parties is almost finished, then we shall settle down to good old home life once more. To-night, the gentlemen who are out shooting with my brother will stay for supper, and I want you to assist Alec. The poor old soul has had a busy time of late, and I have instructed Aunt 'Lizbeth to prepare a royal feast. Let's run down to the kitchen and see how she is getting along. Perhaps we can assist her with something.''

As the afternoon wore on, Miss Innisdale's restlessness increased, and her attention was more evenly divided between the clock and the open window. She was the first to detect the sound of distant hoof-beats, and hastened to the door to welcome her hero home. She asked what luck he had, but did not hear his answer; and her habitual courtesy made her say the proper things to his companions without being conscious of their presence. He was all she saw, and her soul tingled

with an interminable sweetness as his warm hand lay in hers, as his keen brown eyes squirted a flood of glory into her heart.

Supper was announced. Leaning upon his arm, she seemed to tread on air to her place at the dining table. The merry party ranged around. Her happiness was contagious.

It was the grandest supper Beatrice ever ate. She had never before noticed how beautiful the dining-room was. The exquisitely carved wainscotting seemed to shine with a golden lustre new to her; the massive, glass-fronted cupboards, with silver knobs and clasps, evinced a mystic loveliness. From above the wide mantel-piece, a magnificent portrait of her mother smiled down upon her with a tender sweetness, as if she, too, shared her daughter's happiness. She longed to rush to it, to kiss the life-like lips, and whisper in the sympathetic ears the full story of her own joy.

Around the walls, from massive candle-sticks of solid silver, a dozen candles of myrtle-wax shot forth a beam of glorious, rosy-tinted light as they had never done before, and their fragrant odor was more enchanting than it had ever been. Even the high, dark roof seemed to arch over her head a benignant blessing.

The culinary efforts of Aunt 'Lizbeth superseded anything she had previously done. The tempting flavor of viands and of wine was irresistible;—this, at least, the actions of the entire party confirmed;—while the quick, noiseless attentions of Uncle Alec and the light, graceful movements of Fanny Morgan left nothing to be desired.

The company was young, gay and appreciative. Oliver, it is true, was a trifle absorbed, but eyes like his sister's could not discover that. His companions,—Frederick Evans, Benjamin Stoddart and Leopold Silverton,—ate and drank and chatted with the levity of youth without cares. But greater than them all, a giant among pigmies, the single god on Olympus, sat

Arthur Pressley, the man who had created all this happiness. His every word was like a drop of nectar to her soul; the sparkle of his eyes electrified her being, and intensified the joy of existence; the ringing candor of his manly laugh imbued her with a confidence that this should be her lot for ever, and pointed forth whence she should ever look for truth and protection and love.

The conversation was disconnected and common-place, —odd snatches of the field, the hunt, society in Virginia and in Europe. All took part; all were amused.

"Major Pressley," said Silverton during a pause, "you promised to tell us more about your African trip."

"It is a long story," Pressley replied, "and one I love to dwell upon. I'm afraid I shall bore you."

"No." "No." "You won't." "We shan't be bored," the table chorused up.

Pressley slowly emptied his glass and dried his lips. In the expectant hush, Fanny Morgan silently glided up and refilled it.

"It was some eight years ago," said Pressley. "There were Edwin Laftree, Cyril Hedley, George Murchison, Talbot Wesley, Archer Olcott and I. We had touched at Lisbon and at Morocco, and then decided to see something of the dark continent.

"We reached the Slave Coast without event, secured reliable guides, and started up a magnificent river in three small boats. It was a wonderful country through which we passed. At first, the river faded into dismal swamps stretching away on both sides, and we often had to pick our way through dense growths of mangroves, and giant vines, and water lilies; but as we drew farther from the coast, we confronted verdant forests, with massive oak, and teak, and mahogany, and other mighty trees unknown to us. The hills were wrapped in a majestic vesture of green and red and blue and white, unrivalled even in your own Virginian forests.

"We landed often, and made short explorations into

the country. We collected specimens of unknown ferns, orchids, creepers, and beautiful stones, and found frequent traces of gold. We shot deer of various species, several boars, two lions, and a large number of birds. We crept past several native villages, their crude cluster of oval huts lost in the jungle. Oh, I know I tire you with descriptions of the country which so forcibly impressed itself upon my mind.''

''No, no; you don't,'' the party protested.

''From the outset,'' Pressley continued, ''we seemed doomed to misfortune. We were but a week from the coast when Hedley contracted fever. It proved to be of a very virulent type, and, despite our crude efforts and the stock of remedies with which we had come supplied, two days later we laid the jolliest of our party under the shade of a spreading African cotton-tree, promising to take back his body on our return to civilization.

''With ardor dampened, but determination no whit abated, we continued up the river. Our discoveries seemed ample compensation, for we knew we were opening up for England a second, and a greater, Virginia. But ill-luck dogged our steps, even as it did to the pioneers who settled in your own beautiful country. Wesley developed a disease none of us had seen before, and, in spite of all we could do, he, too, was laid in an African grave.

''We grew more cautious of our food and water after that. We tried to keep our bodies fit, and avoided overexertion. And still we journeyed inland.

''The crisis came at length. We had probably covered two thousand miles of the beautiful river, and felt like going on for ever. The natives had not molested us, our guides seemed reliable, our health was perfect, and our spirits were high. We camped one night, as was our custom, in a narrow glen a few rods from the river. Two of the guides remained on watch, as usual; the rest of us turned in to peaceful sleep.

"What happened next, I never knew. I must have slept unusually soundly, for, when a terrible commotion brought me, heavy-eyed, to my feet, I found myself weaponless, surrounded by perhaps a hundred black and bearded savages. My three companions were beside me: the fate of our guides I have not yet learned.

"Without weapons, our defence was feeble. Murchison struck down his assailant with a blow to the jaw: in another instant a spear sank into his heart, and only three of us were left. We were bound, and each led off in a different direction.

"My own gaoler seemed to be the leader of his party. I was taken to his village, and, amidst great rejoicing, I was locked up in a strong barn to await my fate.

"There was one other tenant of the gaol,—a negro warrior of another tribe, who had been taken in battle. Our mutual danger and enforced companionship soon made us fast friends, and, gradually, I learnt his language sufficiently well for us to comprehend each other.

"Our captor was a cannibal chief, he told me, and we were being fattened and kept for the great national holiday, still some months away. Together we tried to devise means of escape, but to no avail.

"At length the holiday arrived, and we were taken out for the butchery. I had learnt enough of my friend's language to address the chief. I asked him for my gun, and discovered he had kept it secure. I told him of its marvellous power, and pointed out that with its use he could overcome all his enemies. He fell, at last, to my arguments. He brought out my belongings intact,—gun, pistols, wallet and knife,—that I should show him how they were to be used.

"I loaded the gun for him to see,—the pistols had not been discharged. Then, when I had the company wound up to the highest pitch of curiosity, I fired clean through the chief's head. Six times the pistols barked almost simultaneously, and his six leading warriors sank beside

him. A slash of my knife set my fellow-prisoner free, and before any one could wake up to the tragedy that had been perpetrated, we were a hundred yards away.

"Heaven, how we ran! A loud halloo was raised, and the crowd darted after us. But an arrow could hardly have overtaken us, and they had none. We reached the river,—my companion knew the spot where the boats were kept. Luckily, one stood in the water. We sprang in together, grasped the oars, and rowed like Oxford racers. They followed hard, a dozen boats at first, but we gained on them at every stroke. In four hours, the last of our pursuers was lost to view.

"Still, we never slackened speed for twenty-four hours. Then we felt reasonably secure, and gathered some provisions, after which, we hurried on again.

"The following day we reached my friend's country. He would have me remain with him, but I had seen enough of Central Africa. I was bound for the coast.

"My progress now was slower, and my provisions soon ran out. But I had my gun, and a good supply of ammunition. On the second day after I had parted from my companion, I reached a country that seemed to promise all that man could wish. I drew my boat up the bank, took my gun, and started into the dense forest. It is a forest I love to remember, and one whose picture time will never efface, for here was destined to happen the loveliest and most wonderful chapter in all my rambles over the world."

He raised his glass to his lips and emptied it. His little audience hung breathless on his words. Beatrice, with parted lips and gluttonous eyes, felt her heart give a mightier bound in admiration of her hero.

"I saw a young antelope, and levelled my rifle at him," Pressley continued. "Before I could pull the trigger, I heard the leaves rustling at my feet. I darted round, and saw, half-a-dozen yards away, the long, gleaming

tusks and small, fiery eyes of a wild boar, charging down upon me in all the ferocity of jungle savagery.

"I turned the gun towards him blindly, and pulled both triggers at once. At the same instant a tornado struck me, gashing me to the soul. I never knew what happened.

"It was long afterwards that I woke up. My first conscious feeling was that my wounded arm had been bandaged, and then I looked up, and beheld the most glorious picture I have ever seen.

"Before me stood a negro maiden. Her beauty must not be judged by the standards we have established and acknowledged. In a Picadilly mansion, she might have been considered queer, and out of place; in the grim African jungle, with her background of dense leafage and blood and savage orgies, the sunlight trickling down upon her long, black tresses and lighting up her tender, enquiring eyes, it was the most heavenly picture I have ever seen. Still I love to dream of her as an angel,—a black angel of black Africa, with all the glory of her continent concentred in her. Yet the Princess Ubaba was pure human."

"The Princess Ubaba?" gasped Beatrice, springing from her chair. "Was it the Princess Ubaba?"

All eyes turned to her, and in that instant it flashed upon her that she had pledged the white woman's word not to reveal what she knew. She glanced at Fanny Morgan. The negress at that moment chanced to be replenishing Oliver's glass. Not a muscle of her body twitched; not an eye-lash moved. She might not have heard the Englishman; she might have been one of the images carved out of black walnut, save only that she changed the position of her arm when the glass had been filled, and glided silently back to her appointed station.

"The Princess Ubaba," Beatrice repeated, her voice trembling in her effort to conceal her emotion. "What a pretty name! Tell me about the Princess Ubaba."

"I cannot tell you of her," Pressley replied, "for, even to myself, I have never been able to describe her satisfactorily. She was but a child then, hardly more than fifteen, but she had a woman's head, and a woman's heart. Her dress was a single loose apron of skin, without adornment, yet nowhere in all Europe have I seen a princess who better looked the part, despite the gaudy and glittering finery of rank.

"She had been led to me by the report of my gun. She had removed the carcass of the boar, which might, otherwise, have pressed me to death, had dressed my wounds, and nursed me back to consciousness. She bore me to a cave, and prepared a couch for me; for she assured me she could not protect me from her people, to whom the white man was unknown.

"For nearly a month I lay there hidden. Daily she came to me, accompanied by a single attendant, bringing me the best that the larder of her mother afforded. Her interest, her devotion, her kindness of heart were wonderful, and, though her education was wofully circumscribed, I have nowhere discovered a girl of her age more naturally intelligent.

"During the four weeks, she learnt a good deal of English, and I even taught her to read. When I was at last able to depart, she carefully provisioned my boat, and sent her most trusted henchman to guide me to the coast. And when she bade me go, I left her as I should have parted from a sister lost for ever in the African wilds. For, though I could never learn to read her emotions, I could see that my departure distressed her gravely."

"I tell you, Pressley," taunted Oliver, who had heard the story several times before, "that the girl was in love with you."

"Nonsense, Oliver," Pressley answered with a touch of impatience, "she was too pure, too innocent, too unselfish for that. I left her a shilling, with my initials

on it, and promised to return. Had grave domestic matters not interferred with my plans, I might already have done so, for I found many Englishmen ready to accompany me to explore her rich and wonderful country. But I have not forgotten my promise, and I suppose by this time Ubaba is queen of Kubanda.''

CHAPTER XXXV.

DEAD HEARTS.

None but her brother had observed the sudden confusion, the quick flush, and then the ghastly pallor of Miss Innisdale's face. And Oliver, though an Oxford graduate, was neither quick-witted nor inquisitive.

The full meaning of her lover's story had flashed upon Beatrice suddenly,—more suddenly than her brother's thoughtless jest. This was the man whom Fanny Morgan loved, whom she said she should love for ever, since she could love no other. And this was the man to whom she, also, had given her own heart, whom she loved with all the intensity of womanly ardor, and whom she knew she could never cease loving. Her slave-girl's rival! God! A triple impossibility!

She did not hear the conclusion of his story, did not hear the others comment on it, did not know that supper was over. His touch on her arm started her violently.

"Shall we go for a stroll through the garden?" he was asking, smiling pleasantly in happy remembrance of last night.

"I—I do not feel myself to-night," she forced herself to stammer back. "Won't you please excuse me? I'd so much rather go to bed."

"You do look pale. And your hands are cold and shivering. You are not ill, are you, dear?" he enquired anxiously.

"It is only a passing spell," she replied wearily. "I shall soon be all right. Thank you; you are very considerate."

She labored up the stairs to her room, resting heavily on his arm. At the door he paused, and turned her lips

towards him. She thought it might be easier to endure his caress this once than to explain, for she had barely strength to stand.

He sprang back from her ghastly face.

"Heavens! Betty, you are ill; very ill. I'll get the doctor at once."

"Please don't, Major Pressley. Indeed, I shall soon be all right."

"Go in, and lie down," Pressley counselled, as he saw her clutch at the door-post to steady herself. "I'll send up your maid."

"No, don't." Then, after a pause, she added, "Yes, you may send 'Lizbeth to me."

A minute later, Aunt 'Lizbeth bustled into the room.

"Laws 'a' massy! Ma honey baby, am you ill?" she exclaimed as she glanced at her mistress' haggard face.

"Merely a little tired, 'Lizbeth," she answered. "Tell Fanny I have retired, and shall not need her."

"Sho', ma baby," cried the old lady, starting to undress her mistress without authority. "Now jes' you come lay on you ol' mummy's bosam wher' you is growed, an' mek me croon you to sleep."

"Thank you, Auntie, but really I don't need it. I shall soon sleep it off. You may go."

With a last, reluctant look at her mistress, Aunt 'Lizbeth closed the door behind her, and descended the stairs. Beatrice threw herself helplessly into a chair.

Sleep? With this thing tugging at her heart? She cast an ungrateful glance at her pillow, as if it contained a venom she feared.

Slowly her mind picked up the details of the puzzle before her. This was the man Fanny Morgan had loved in the jungle of her own home-land. And Fanny had known him from the first. She remembered their first meeting, when the bottle of wine had fallen from her hands,—hands that had never before been careless. She remembered the tearful girl she had seen under the

oleanders, who had made her renew her promise of secrecy. She remembered that Fanny Morgan had avoided the gaze of the Englishman whenever it was possible for her to do so.

Of course, Pressley had not recognized the girl. Who could identify a haughty princess in Central Africa with a negro slave-girl on a Virginian plantation? And he might never know, for she had pledged the white woman's word to eternal secrecy, and the negress was not likely to betray herself.

Nor could the revelation do more than complicate the problem. She did not misjudge either of them. No union between them could now be possible. An Englishman of independent means and honored ancestry could not wed a negro slave-girl, even if the Virginian law did not penalize such an alliance. And to less she knew neither would stoop.

Nor was there any evidence that Pressley had cared for the princess in the way in which that spirited and romantic young lady had accepted their association. Gratitude and admiration his manly narrative showed, but not a tinge of love. And the girl's own story had never charged that the mysterious stranger had loved her, or had sought her love.

On the other hand, Beatrice had irrevocably given her own heart to the Englishman. She knew now that she could love no other, could not live without him. Yet, she could not live with him. The rival of her slave? To see her negro maid cast wistful glances up to her husband's eyes, and to know those glances meant love,—undying love, such as she alone should feel? It could not be.

Who was to blame? She strove to be just, even in her sorrow. Neither of them had done wrong. But for the Princess Ubaba, Arthur Pressley would never have returned to England. All she did was to save him, and then to love him, innocently, with all her girlish heart.

She had thought it noble of the girl when she had heard the story in the wild Virginian hills. She could not reverse her judgment now. And she did not see how anyone could know Arthur Pressley without loving him. Pressley, too, had done nothing except meet with an accident and need aid. For that she dared not blame him.

If the girl had never told her tale, it might have been different. Yet it was for her sake that Fanny Morgan had recounted the story of her life, which she had guarded so closely. And it was as a result of her own persistence that the story of the white man had been added; the rest had been told without reference to him.

If Pressley had kept back his proposal for twenty-four hours, she would have known what answer to make,—might have kept her heart from flitting into his keeping. Or if the story of his African adventures had been told a day earlier. Yet, he could not have foreseen the connection between the two.

Nor could she blame herself for having yielded to his persuasion, for having given him her love. It seemed a matter in which she had taken no conscious part. Her heart had simply flown to him. She could not have saved herself. He was the one man made for her to love, the one man she had ever loved, the one she ever could.

No one was to blame. Yet fate had enmeshed these three in that entangling snare from which there was no escape. And she alone knew all the coils: she alone must face the solution.

The license for Fanny Morgan's freedom was nearly ready. And the law of Virginia, never, it is true, enforced, provided that freed slaves should leave the state. If Fanny Morgan went, never to be seen again——

But Beatrice could not commit an injustice simply because the law permitted it. Could she, for her own selfish happiness, sacrifice the unhappy girl whom she

had learned to love,—the girl who had saved her life at the risk of her own, when she might have turned and fled at the first sign of danger as Pompey had done?

Yet it was for her to decide the fate of three. She gritted her teeth firmly, pressed her hand to her cold brow, and made her choice. *Life-long unhappiness for her!*

She hoped it did not mean that for Pressley, too. He might recover from his infatuation, and learn to love another. She hoped he would. It would be humiliating to her that he should forget her for another; but her love was stronger than her pride, and her sense of justice strongest of all. She would suffer in silence, as Fanny Morgan suffered, if only he, her hero, her god, were happy.

Morning dawned upon the pale figure upright in her chair, upon the white bed still untouched. The handle of the door moved slowly. Fanny Morgan stepped into the room.

"Mercy; Miss Betty, what's the matter?" she gasped. "You are very ill. You haven't——" her eyes fell on the unused sheets,—"you haven't been to bed."

"I didn't feel quite well, dear," Beatrice answered. "But I'm better now."

"You oughtn't to have done it, Miss Betty," the girl reproved her gently. "You should have gone to bed. Let me put you to bed now, and get you some hot tea."

"No, Fanny. Leave me now. When I need you, I shall ring."

There was a tinge of annoyance in her voice, which failed to escape the girl's sharp ears.

"Thank you, Miss Betty," she said sadly. "You were very kind to me, and I shall not forget. Fanny Morgan, your slave-girl, shall never change."

Beatrice looked up at the girl's clouded brow, and her heart chided her for her unkindness.

"Come to me, Fanny," she said tenderly. "How easy

it is for us to be unjust! Kiss me, dear. There, now; we are sisters, as we were in the wild forests. Heavens! if I only had your nerves!''

''It comes from much suffering and a dead heart, Miss Betty,'' Fanny answered kindly. ''Heaven keep it from you! And, Miss Betty, the Princess Ubaba died years and years ago. Fanny Morgan, the slave-girl, does not remember her.''

''You may go now, Fanny,'' Beatrice answered not unkindly. ''The white woman chooses the path of honor for herself, and even her sister may not advise her.''

Fanny Morgan turned from the room. At the door she paused:

''I almost forgot to say, Miss Betty, that it was Major Pressley who sent me up to bring him word how you were.''

''Thank the major for his solicitude,'' said Beatrice with a coolness she could hardly feel, ''and tell him I am quite recovered. Ask him to see me in the garden immediately after breakfast, if he is not too busy.—And you might let 'Lizbeth send up something for me. I shall not be at the table.''

Fanny Morgan descended the stairs moodily. She had read her mistress' heart.

Arthur Pressley hurried through a breakfast for which he had small appetite, and hastened to the garden where the happiest hour of his life had been spent. He had not long to wait, for, from the window of her room, Miss Innisdale had been watching. She descended the stairs, crossed the bit of lawn, and swung open the garden gate.

Pressley ran towards her.

''Heavens! Beatrice, you are unkind,—unkind to yourself,'' he cried. ''You have been ill; very ill.''

''I am not ill, Major,'' she replied. ''Unfortunately, I did not sleep well, and I am conscious that I look a trifle pale. But it is nothing.''

He had taken her hand, and led her towards the seat that he considered most hallowed of all. He sat beside her, and looked lovingly up into her eyes.

"Major Pressley," she said with a steady calmness of which she did not believe herself capable, "you have conferred upon me the greatest honor you could offer to any woman, and from my heart I appreciate the intensity, honesty and purity of your love. And your ardor, as well as my own childish inexperience, swept me beyond my own control, made me appear to accept your devotion, made me, if you will, promise to return your noble love.

"Major Pressley, I have slept upon my decision; have sat awake on it when I should have been sleeping. I still think you the greatest creature that the Great Creator ever made,—the noblest, the purest, the best. And I feel myself the heartless, irresponsible, ungenerous jilt you must think me. But, Major Pressley, I cannot marry you, and I have come to ask you to relieve me of my promise."

He had waited impatiently for her to finish, while the blood criss-crossed his open brow. Now his face grew white as he replied.

"Heavens! Beatrice, do you know what you are asking? The ruin of two lives, dear; the breaking of two hearts. Think over it again, love; take more time and search your heart, but do not ask me—that."

"I have given the matter all the thought it is possible for me to devote to the consideration of my own happiness and that of the noblest man in the world," she answered. "The course I am taking is the only possible one. It were criminal of me to mar the lives of us both."

The steadiness of her voice irked him as much as it surprised her. If there had been a tremor, he might have hoped.

"Betty, darling," he pleaded, "I can love no other but you. You mean more than life itself to me. I cannot give you up. Is there some fault in me that I can cure, —some failing that time, or love, or earnest reformation

may efface? I shall sacrifice my dearest passions just to win and keep your love."

"Major Pressley," she replied, "I know no man on earth more worthy of a woman's heart than you. And can you think what it means to me to fight my own selfishness, to keep myself from grasping what any noble-minded girl must wish to grasp? Ah, it was a bitter, soul-rending struggle, but in the end your own nobility won. Nothing must mar your happiness, no dishonor stain our life."

"Dishonor, Beatrice?" he gasped. "Who dared couple dishonor with the name of Arthur Pressley? I——"

"None does. None dare. None ever shall," she answered. "Your life is clean: I know it is. So is mine. Yet we may not wed in honor. More I cannot say."

"You have some secret, dear, that you will not entrust to me; some little matter that your innocent heart magnifies a thousand-fold. Let me share it with you. It's not enough to stand between us."

She hesitated for an instant.

"Yes, I have a secret," she replied,—"a secret pure as the tears that angels weep. Yet, were I to betray that trust, were I to give you the right to call me wife, then you would lead from the altar a dishonored bride, a girl who would blush to look into your honest eyes. Such you would not have: such I shall not be."

"Beatrice, sweet, pure, good angel of my life, do not let your pride separate us. Honor is an elastic word; dishonorable you can never be. Vows have been broken without dishonor, and trifles ignored; for love knows no law. You are too pure, dear, to understand the latitude which honor allows. Me you cannot trust, for I have a selfish reason to disregard your scruples. But your father has no reason to be unjust, and is a man of the highest honor. Consult him first, dear. Let him decide for you, and I shall accept his verdict."

"I have the fullest confidence in my father," she replied, "but not less in you, Major Pressley, for I know you cannot be selfish. Yet this matter I must decide alone, with my own heart and my God. Oh, Major Pressley, you have ever been noble and generous. Pity my helplessness, and tell me I am free."

"God! Beatrice, you bid me tear my own heart from my bosom and trample it in the dust.—No, do not weep, dear. I love you with a heart that knows not to relax its grip; a heart that cannot change. But I must not hold you on those terms. You are free, Beatrice; free of the pledge you gave me two nights ago: a word shall not ensnare you. But, heaven be my witness, I shall never cease to love you, and to strive to bind you with an affection no woman can resist."

She slid to her knees, and seized his hand before he could prevent her.

"God bless you, my friend; my noble, generous, unselfish friend. There is no word of thanks that I can utter. Yet, please forget the unworthy girl who wandered across your path. Seek a nobler, a worthier woman who can appreciate your own nobility, and if you ever remember the unfortunate Beatrice, you'll see 'twas all for the best. Go now, my friend, and leave me to my shame. Return when I'm myself again. We'll ride through the fields, and row down the river, and laugh, and dance, and forget this unfortunate chapter in our lives."

He went, with eyes that did not see his path, with feet that needed all his efforts to propel, with head pendant like the tail of a beaten cur. And Beatrice sat there staring at the flowers without knowing that flowers were there; sat silent, motionless, tearless. For her heart, too, was dead.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A PERIOD OF UNREST.

No eye reads more faithfully the emotions of a beloved daughter than do those of a devoted father. A mother can afford to be purblind, but the confidences to which she is entitled are often withheld from the father through the natural modesty of the most innocent; and he must study her actions, translate her words, and fill in the blanks, if he would read her heart. Yet he undertakes this task with a thorough sympathy which the more endears her to him.

The charms her lover sees, the father also sees, but he sees them multiplied by all that was dear in her mother long before her, and he does not scruple to make a generous allowance as a sop to his own self-gratification. Yet this is not all vanity; it is love,—paternal love; the noblest, the purest, the nighest eternal that exists.

A week passed before Colonel Innisdale returned from Williamsburg: an hour later he had read his daughter's unease. She had recovered her accustomed self-possession; chatted, laughed, and joked with her old-time frankness; seemed perfectly at ease. Yet his soul-searching, sympathetic eyes had discovered the sore spot in her heart.

For several days he waited, in the hope that he might have her confidence, that she might herself remove the obstacle which stood in the path of her happiness, or that her lover would frankly inform him of the position in which they stood.

This, too, was Pressley's intention. But the fear that she might be displeased at his making any such revelation, or that even her father might misunderstand

her,—for to that extent does the conceit of a lover often go,—and the hope that he might yet be able to overcome her scruples, deterred him. His resolution was still sincere to surmount whatever difficulties stood in his path, for he well knew that he could never love any other woman.

At length the honest colonel put his anxiety into words. He was alone in his office one morning when Beatrice sauntered in. He laid down his papers, and drew her to him.

"Is my little girl happy?" he enquired, as he kissed the warm brow.

"Quite happy, dad," she answered gaily. "I'm always happy when I have you to love."

"Have you nothing to tell your old dad?" he coaxed.

"Nothing, dear. Life moves so slowly here; though it's been ever so much jollier since Ollie came home."

"And Major Pressley," Innisdale added. "Don't you like him?"

"Indeed, I do, dad. He's a fine man; the noblest I have met."

"Is he going to take my little girl away from me?"

She cuddled up nearer to him.

"I'm going to stay with my daddy till he is tired of me," she answered.

"You have no mother, dear; and a father is a cumbersome old thing for a grown girl to have. Can't tell him any of your secrets, can you?"

"Daddy, sweet, sweet daddy," she cried, throwing her arms about his neck, and kissing him effusively, "please don't say that. You've been mother and father and a whole bunch more to me. Of course I'd tell you all my little secrets. Haven't I always told them to you?"

"You have, dear," he nodded. "But Major Pressley asked my permission to speak with you, and I have been expecting either of you to tell me something of what passed between you."

She paused for an instant, as a flush darkened her features.

"He asked me to marry him, dad," she answered softly, "and I refused. Have I displeased you?"

"Certainly not, dearie," Innisdale answered hastily. "I was only worried lest he might have won you from me, for he is a very likable chap. But, of course, if you find his presence here irksome or objectionable——"

"I don't, dad," she interrupted. "Major Pressley is, indeed, the finest gentleman I know. But I cannot marry him."

"And isn't there something that keeps you worried, dear; some little uncertainty that gnaws at your heart?"

"Nothing, dad. My mind is fully made up: the struggle is past. I shall be your daughter for life."

Innisdale read the unconscious abandon in her voice, and knew she had given her heart and could never love again. But he felt it was not the proper time to pursue the subject. He would win her confidence, would learn the truth, and then, if Pressley had slighted his child, God help Pressley.

It is not possible that the relationships at Innismount could have remained as smooth as they had previously been. The colonel felt that the young Englishman was in some way responsible for his daughter's uneasiness; Oliver, who had been first to notice her confusion, without trying to attribute a direct cause to it, looked with suspicion upon his friend; and even Beatrice, in her cautiousness not to betray her ungovernable adoration of the man she could never wed, unconsciously treated him with a careful formality which, without her knowing it, gave grounds to their unworthy suspicions.

Nor was Pressley slow to notice the change. For a moment he wondered whether the time had not come for his departure from Virginia; then, fighter that he was, he decided that his flight would but confirm the opinions

they had formed. He would live down whatever they suspected, and win his darling yet.

It was a discouraging struggle. If she had been bashful and shy and evasive, it would have been easy to tame and capture her. But she was ever frank and straightforward; she never avoided his company; and, on their long rides or rambles, she never insisted that they should be accompanied.

Plainly she relied upon his honor; plainly she trusted him fully. He could even believe she loved him wholeheartedly, and that the obstacle to their happiness stood insurmountable before her. Love-making under such conditions was impossible. Unless he could discover and remove the obstacle, there could be no hope; and his every effort to locate it failed.

His own confusion and uncertainty blinded him to the greater confusion and uncertainty which ranged around. Matters of far greater moment to the world than the breaking of two innocent young hearts, were rending Virginia apart.

The confusion between Massachusetts and London was rapidly rushing to a climax. The Virginian Assembly had voted to support the sister colony. The governor had dissolved the Assembly, but the Assembly had laughed at the governor, and gone on with its work. A convention had been sent to Philadelphia to arrange the affairs of a nation that did not exist.

Men who loved England as they loved only Virginia else, shook their heads gravely. A reconciliation between the governor and the burgesses must in some manner be effected; for the governor represented England and its sovereign, while the burgesses represented England and its people—then resident in Virginia, but hoping soon to go "home," were it only on a visit. And with every step, reconciliation seemed farther away. It was at this pass that the governor suggested to his friend, Colonel Innisdale, an informal conference at Innismount.

Critics have done scant justice to the memory of John Murray, Earl of Dunmore. They have too often pictured him as a helpless mannikin in the hands of North and his king, and as nothing more.

The age and conditions of his administration did, indeed, tend to helplessness, and Dunmore was frankly loyal to the mission he had undertaken, and to the man who had selected him for that mission. But, second only to his duty to his sovereign, he had a strong love for the country he governed, and a keen interest in its people. He was a diplomat above his accepted reputation, a brave man, a conscientious servant, and an affable gentleman.

Dunmore's reasons for suggesting to Colonel Innisdale a sort of week-end party at Innismount, in which the affairs of government might be discussed, were two-fold. The dissolution of the Assembly practically left the governor out of touch with the people, and he realized that the two parties steadily drifted farther apart. To recall the burgesses he had dissolved was a humiliation to which he was not yet ready to stoop; yet if the same men could be brought together under any other name, he, as one of the party, and not as Governor of Virginia, would yield to almost any extent rather than precipitate the crisis.

Matthew Innisdale and Patrick Henry were without doubt the most radical of the Virginians; and Innisdale, one of the wealthiest and most respected planters in the colony, was by far the most influential. Henry was at that time in Philadelphia, with Washington, Lee, Randolph, and others; and if Innisdale was his host, his two most violent opponents would be silenced. A compromise might easily be reached, and the gentlemen then at Philadelphia would be bound by it.

Innisdale was not deceived by this latter consideration.

"Major Crawford," he said to his friend after the details had been arranged, "his lordship has taken an effective step to silence me in this discussion, since, as host, I must not offend any of my guests. You and I

have thought together, worked together, fought together. I leave it to you to take my place, to say the things that I should say, and to save me from any impropriety.''

Some thirty gentlemen sat down to supper in Colonel Innisdale's mansion that Friday evening. They had assembled as guests of the colonel,—nothing more. Several of them were accompanied by their wives or daughters; and there were half-a-dozen young men. They represented the best families scattered throughout Virginia, many of whom have become famous in history.

Dunmore smiled and bowed and shook hands around with that cordial and well-bred geniality even his greatest enemies have not denied him. His conversation was witty, sparkling, conciliating. He was playing the greatest game of his life; the stake was the sovereignty of England and the fame of the Murrays.

The supper was magnificent, served with that opulent liberality inseparable from the wealthier plantations of colonial times. There was a profusion of the best French wines. The party was in the finest of spirits, even though the gaiety was so ostentatious as to seem superficial.

Healths were drunk to the King, to the Governor, to the Colony of Virginia, to Colonel Innisdale, and to Miss Innisdale. The ladies, led by Mrs. Crawford, retired to an adjoining room, to drink strong souchong that had never paid His Majesty's treasurer the stipulated threepence per pound, and to listen to music and songs and idle gossip; though many ears among them seemed eager to catch snatches from the room they had left.

The gentlemen remained in the dining-room. The tables had been cleared. A servant approached with a tray on which reposed thirty new clay pipes, all filled with the best Virginia tobacco. Another followed with a large silver bowl, also filled with the same material. Alec replenished the glasses. The company grew more hilari-

ous. Yet all avoided the topic that was uppermost in every breast.

Innumerable unnecessary toasts were drunk. Whenever conversation flagged, a new one was proposed. The younger men led in this, for the colonel's wine was irresistible.

There came another pause. Innisdale looked enquiringly up to the governor.

"I wanted to suggest, Colonel," said Dunmore, "that, since we shall all be here for the morrow, and some of us are a bit tired, we postpone till morning the discussion you propose. I have little doubt that, after the royal welcome you have given us, we shall be more fit with a few hours' sleep."

There was no dissenting voice. To the gentlemen of the day, a few hours wasted meant nothing. And Dunmore had gained a point. He had created the impression that it was a parley for which he was not a bit anxious.

Conversation struggled along, but Alec was busier now. Toasts were drunk, and healths proposed, often amidst uproarious laughter.

Oliver Innisdale raised his glass.

"To the health of the Princess Ubaba," he proposed thickly,—"Major Pressley's black beauty."

No apology can be offered for Oliver's words. It would be charitable to attribute them to the wine, did not the reputation of Oxford in those days make such a supposition improbable. He had seen his sister's quick change of expression the first time she had heard that name, and her suffering since; yet this were too childish a revenge to offer. Probably he had inherited his father's hastiness of expression, without the older man's experience and innate sense of justice.

The words were greeted with a roar of laughter from the younger men, as they raised their glasses to their lips. The elders sat silent, motionless, as though they had not heard.

Arthur Pressley rose slowly to his feet with cool dignity.

"The friends of the house of Pressley," he said in a calm, cutting voice, "have never been the subject of silly jests and ridicule. That is a name which my own sense of what is due to all my friends would prevent me from introducing; it has been suggested, and there is my glove to any one who scruples to drink to the health of my purest and noblest friend."

The glove fluttered to the middle of the table, two feet from where Colonel Innisdale sat, and many felt that the challenge was principally aimed at him.

Innisdale glanced up with eyes that flashed defiance. He be forced, in his own house, to drink the health of a negress, a savage no better than the hundreds who hoed his fields and gathered his tobacco? Not if a thousand devils confronted him. Nor should his guests be forced.

But Dunmore, a diplomatist worthy of a better fate than that which eventually overtook him in the service of England, was narrowly watching the colonel. Any unpleasantness at this moment, he well knew, might spoil all his hopes.

"Permit me, Colonel; it falls to me," he said hastily, and clutched the glove as the fingers of both Crawford and Innisdale fell upon it.

"It seems a queer thing," said the governor with rare tact, "that our friend should think any Virginian gentleman would hesitate to honor his friend, or that in this loyal colony we should fail to honor the name of any potentate friendly to our sovereign liege of England. But Major Pressley's mistake is readily excusable by the presence of negroes on the Virginian plantations; and the major does not understand that this is an entirely different class of people. The Princess Ubaba, like the Ethiopian whom Moses wedded, and the queen royally entertained by Solomon, the wisest of monarchs, is worthy of our highest esteem. Permit me to return your

gage, Major; and may it next time fall in a more necessary cause. I drink to the health of the Princess Ubaba."

Crawford was among the first to empty his glass, and several of the gentlemen followed his example. A few, however, waited on the colonel. He hesitated for a moment, till his gaze met the chiding, entreating eyes of Crawford. Then he slowly raised the glass to his lips, coughed, sputtered, choked, then set it down—empty. Plainly, it was a concession, not to Pressley, but to his other guests.

"You are right, Colonel," continued Dunmore, taking advantage of his success, "but we must pardon Major Pressley this time. He is not conversant with Virginian hospitality, and, in the countries through which he has travelled, such displays might have been necessary. By the way, Major," he added, rapidly shifting the conversation from the sore subject, "you fought in India, I understand."

"Under Clive, my lord," Pressley answered, "and won my commission before I was twenty."

"A fine record. And you have travelled extensively."

"In Europe, Asia and Africa."

"A truly wonderful performance at your age," said the governor. "We shall be indebted to you for a wealth of information."

"The little I have gathered is ever at your service, my lord," Pressley replied, "and at the service of my fellow-men. We know too little of the world in which we live."

"That is true," Dunmore admitted. "One subject often brought up both here and in England is the African slave-trade. You have seen it at its source. What do you think about it?"

"I think, my lord, that slavery is a great curse upon the negro, but an infinitely greater curse upon the white

man. In the interests of both, the trade ought to be put down, and the slaves freed."

"Mercy! Major Pressley," gasped Charles Adamson, a large slave-holder, "you'd be creating a worse condition. What could we do with all the blacks around?"

"That," Pressley replied, "is a question of expediency, and has nothing to do with the justice of the case. It is, certainly, not their fault that they are here. Still, I have been told that the negroes make excellent servants. Why should we doubt that with the right handling they should make equally good subjects?"

"Nothing doing there, Major," said Adamson. "The slave does nothing save under direct supervision. The moment the overseer turns his back, the lazy rascals refuse to work."

"Can you blame them for that, Mr. Adamson?" Pressley asked. "Work is, to them, the sign-manual of their fate; even among our own people in Virginia, I have found that labor is considered disgraceful, and the lot of slaves. Can you blame the negro if he refuses to grasp gleefully the badge of his servitude?"

"You think, then," asked the governor, "that the negro would turn out to be docile and industrious as a free subject?"

"That is my belief, my lord. But, of course, I have no personal knowledge as to how the freed negro acts. There are others here more fitted to give an opinion on the matter."

"My own experience," said Crawford, "would tend to bear out Major Pressley. One of my negroes has been freed, and I since find him far more industrious, and extremely reliable."

"And I," said Innisdale, for the first time re-entering the conversation, "have a girl who has saved my daughter's life with a courage and devotion worthy of a white woman. But these are, of course, exceptions."

"I doubt whether or not those are the exceptions,"

Pressley returned. "A careful investigation might prove it otherwise."

"It would, perhaps, be a good thing for the negroes if they were freed," said Crawford, "but Major Pressley has entirely ignored the interests of the Virginian planters. It would be a good thing for horses if the governor's coach could travel from Williamsburg to Innismount without them; but since this cannot be done, he does not consider it an injustice to the animals to avail himself of their service. In the same manner, plantations cannot be worked without slaves."

"Contrarily, Major Crawford," said Pressley, "it is the interest of the white man that I am chiefly considering. It is upon him that the system works hardest."

"You are right there, Major," Adamson interjected. "My rascals do make slavery a curse to me. I live in perpetual fear of the black devils."

"That is but one of its hardships," Pressley answered; "and the peopling of a country with more slaves than masters is a condition not to be ignored. But there are greater evils. I have already said that the system has brought the Virginian to consider labor degrading, while in England it is still honorable. Hence, the Virginian has, in many cases, developed into a helplessness which is hardly British.

"The various shades of complexion one sees in Virginia is certainly not complimentary to British honor; and, blackest of all black blots on a black page, because negroes are as valuable as horses, the same methods have in both cases been applied to stock the plantations, and to supply the best blood wherever it can be procured.* Such a condition cannot fail to lower the moral standard of white Virginia; and it needs no prophet to look for-

* Though slave-breeding was not unknown in colonial days, it was not till after 1807, when the abolition of the African slave-trade stopped the imported supply, that it developed into a prolific and profitable industry.—The Author.

ward another century, and see the very passion you incite burst forth a menace to the daughters of its instigators."

"That means," said Adamson, "that the negroes must perpetually be kept under control. The emancipation you advocate would at once precipitate the catastrophe you foresee."

"I am not so sure that negro slavery can continue," Pressley answered. "The highest court has held that it is incompatible with British justice. Some of the most prominent men and women in England have formed societies for abolishing it; and at least one lady has bequeathed her entire fortune to that end. Even in America, the voice of protest is too often raised to be ignored."

"It is," said Dunmore, "a matter that should be carefully studied. But isn't it about time that we rejoin the ladies?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN ATTEMPT AT RECONCILIATION.

When the breakfast dishes had been cleared from the long mahogany table next morning, Colonel Innisdale rose slowly to his feet.

"My lord, and gentlemen," he said, "I believe every man here shares with me the sorrow with which we behold our own people being slowly torn apart by mistakes and misunderstandings. And when I took upon myself the honor of asking you to share with me the poor hospitality of my modest homestead, it was with a strong faith that, as loyal, open-hearted Englishmen together, and, above all, as friends and gentlemen, we might strive to arrive at some means by which our people may be reunited.

"The conditions are known to all of us. The time for recrimination and denunciation is past. If anything can be done, it must be done at once, or we shall be too late to save the two lands dearest to our hearts."

The colonel's studied moderation surprised his friends. They did not even applaud.

"Gentlemen," said Dunmore, retaining his seat, as if to emphasize the informality of the gathering, "when our worthy host suggested to me a visit to his estate, during which we might discuss the unfortunate affairs of the colony, I at once saw the possibility of a solution. And, while it is impossible for the Governor of Virginia to take part in any such discussion, John Murray is here with you to-day, one of you, a Virginian and an Englishman, my sole desire an end to the embroilment that is setting brother against brother.

"It is, indeed, too late to discuss the matter; but,

considering the situation in which the governor is placed, and the bitter criticisms hurled at him, you will, perhaps, allow me, who understands his position better than any other man in the colony, to explain his difficulties without trying to apologize for his mistakes. For we all make mistakes, gentlemen; and who makes least, wins.

"The governor is a servant employed by the king to represent him in the colony and enforce his laws. Virginians are Englishmen, and, therefore, bound by the laws of England; yet, like other Englishmen in every part of England, there are many who do not wish to accept certain laws. In some cases, the law is, indeed, a faulty one. Sometimes the officer entrusted with its enforcement himself sees its folly. But must he, then, set up his own opinion against the wisdom of the appointed law-makers, and refuse to do his duty? If we did that, gentlemen, there could be no law, and no government. I only want you to see that the governor is the most misunderstood and the most unfortunate man in the entire affair. His sworn duty lies to his sovereign; his heart lies with his fellow-countrymen of Virginia; he must choose a path that will offend neither. What can he do?"

"He can resign," answered Hector Warren from the other end of the table.

"Yes," Dunmore replied slowly, "he can resign; I have thought of that. He can throw up his job, and return to England a discredited man. He may even be able to get another job in a brick-kiln or a slate-quarry. I have been pondering over it for some time. And a soldier, set to watch for the enemy's approach, can also throw up his job when he hears the footsteps of the foe. But Englishmen, whether they live in Virginia or in Britain, apply a distasteful epithet to the name of such a man. A resignation, gentlemen, will take more than a year to become effective, and during that time, the governor must act. But I shall not waste your time in

bewailing the governor's fate. You doubtless have some suggestions to offer."

"In the first place," said Crawford, "the Assembly must be recalled."

"That can easily be done," Dunmore answered. "They shall regulate the affairs of the colony, as they have always done; and their speech shall be unfettered. But the governor must insist that the name of His Sovereign Majesty be respected."

"Secondly," said Crawford, without comment on his lordship's condition, "Gage must withdraw his troops from Boston, and the port be allowed its former privileges."

"There you have me," sighed the governor. "I have no jurisdiction over General Gage. He would probably treat any such suggestion from me as unwarranted impudence. I cannot regulate the actions of Gage, nor can any one else in Virginia."

"We can," said Warren. "We are going to drive him out."

The governor ignored the threat.

"But the situation in Boston is not as grave as it might appear," he continued. "The British soldiers and the people of Boston are but brothers, and the good sense and mutual toleration shown on both sides have prevented any serious disturbance. It is plain that His Majesty's government only means to scold Boston, as a father might chastise a beloved child, without making the punishment hurt. You will admit, gentlemen, that it would be a humiliating thing for the British Government to back down before a tiny Massachusetts village."

"Not so humiliating to back down as to be knocked down," retorted the incorrigible Warren.

The governor turned a pitying eye in the direction of his tormentor.

"So far, then, we have only reached the recalling of the Assembly," he said.

"That, my lord, will do little if the injustice to Boston continues," Crawford urged. "The burgesses will but reiterate their determination to stand beside the suffering colony."

"Couldn't a deputation from the Assembly be sent to Boston," suggested Samuel Percy, a prominent tory, "instructed to consult with the Massachusetts leaders and then with General Gage? It might be successful."

"Such a deputation is under contemplation," answered Warren, "and it certainly will be successful. There will be five thousand members, and they'll carry guns and swords and other effective arguments."

"Mr. Warren," said Crawford gently, "we are trying to make peace, not war. Heaven knows, the chances are sufficiently slight, and I cannot believe there is one gentleman here who wishes to see his sword dyed in the blood of an Englishman."

"If the Assembly will appoint such a deputation," said Dunmore, "I shall be willing to recommend it favorably to the Commander-in-chief. That, certainly, is in the province of the Governor of Virginia. Still, the general has orders which, like myself, he may not disobey. He can keep his troops from violence, as he has, so far, done; but he cannot withdraw them from the colony without His Majesty's orders. However, the experiment is worth trying. That puts us two steps nearer to a reconciliation. What next? Major Pressley, you are one of us."

Pressley glanced around him carelessly. He had taken little apparent interest in the proceedings, and the coolness between him and his host was evident to all, for they were both too honest to dissemble.

"My lord," he said diffidently, "I am a soldier and a traveller, not a statesman nor an orator; and the straightforward and open course which seems simple to me may appear otherwise to the trained diplomat. Nevertheless, an Englishman ought not to need urging in a matter

which concerns all Englishmen; and, as I left England later than most of you, and made more recent friendships in Virginia, it is possible that I more intimately understand the two countries than many here.

"I know that the people of England are in utter ignorance of conditions in the colonies: the government of England insists in its demands, chiefly because it believes that the colonies will not insist in theirs. If the insistence on both sides continues, there can be but a single outcome, which I shudder to contemplate.

"The very slightness of the bone of contention is, to me, its greatest gravity. Had England faced some sudden necessity, to meet which she must raise fifty million pounds, I have little doubt that the colonies would unitedly rise to her assistance and sacrifice wholeheartedly. Even the sponsors of the obnoxious tea-tax, the cause of all this unpleasantness, admit that the amount it could bring under the best conditions could not cover the cost of collecting it. Naturally, the ordinary, unobservant Englishman cannot see why America should hesitate to pay a tax which leaves the commodity cheaper than it was before it was taxed; and he cannot believe the opposition serious. That is because the Englishman does not realize his own characteristics.

"Much travel has enabled me to see my countrymen with less partial eyes. The Englishman is essentially vain, conceited, self-conscious. He can excuse injury, but not insult. Knock him down, and he'll probably rise up your friend: belittle his dignity and you've made a life-time enemy. And the Virginian is in all things an Englishman.

"The tea-tax is not an injury to the colonies,—for, as your lordship knows, it is not paid, yet there is no shortage of tea. It is not even a manly insult: it is a slight. It says to the colonists, 'Who are you? We do not recognize you. You have no right to speak to us.'

And this sort of language no Englishman in any part of the world will tolerate.

"Therefore, the colonies will not yield their demand, and England must withdraw her order. There is no alternative. War? Rebellion? What would rebellion mean?

"Would the people of England draw their swords against the men, and against the sons of the men who wrote such names as Cressy, Blenheim and Quebec in their history? But suppose they did. Suppose the overwhelming odds of England came down upon the colonies. Can the sons of the men whose life-blood won us Agincourt and Poitiers, the sons of men who, a dozen strong or a hundred strong, attacked the wild forests and wilder savages of the new world and won a continent from them, can the sons of these daring Englishmen learn to realize when they are outnumbered?

"The men who climbed the steeps of Abraham, the men who stood behind Clive at Plassey, might have given up the conflict, might have surrendered, and hoped for mercy. And England, disappointed but forgiving, might have received them. The colonist who draws his sword against his king can never surrender, can never expect mercy, can have no king and no country. With him it must be victory or death in the truest sense. And he will fight as desperate Englishmen in all times have fought, doggedly to the death. England, rising in her might, can exterminate the colonies: she cannot conquer them.

"For the colonies will unite, my lord. Virginia and Maryland, New York and Connecticut may have their differences and their jealousies, but they will unite against a common fate. Judge Englishmen by Englishmen. No country is more torn by rival jealousies and contending factions than our England, yet when the confusion is at its highest, no foreign foe has menaced

our shores but has found a united England to oppose him. Will colonial Englishmen do less?

"Shall we see it come to that, my lord? Will France and Spain and the nations we have humbled rub their hands in glee, and laugh at the ruin of the kingdom their mighty navies, their finest armies, their shrewdest diplomacy dared not oppose, torn to shreds by its own internal strife? Will they stand idle by, or will they not rather also strike a blow when all England is too busy fighting England to defend herself?

"Then England must yield to the demands of Englishmen. Then all Britons must again combine to ward off the common foe. Why wait till so much mischief is done? Why not combine now, when England may assure peace by yielding so little of what gains her nothing?

"I cannot agree with you, my lord, that England would be humiliated by yielding to the demands of a tiny Massachusetts village. Who admits justice yields nothing; and the valor of England needs no vindication. Massachusetts and Virginia know that England can fight: let them know, also, that England can be just,—can even be magnanimous.

"I could not so carefully observe the trouble without also seeing the remedy,—a natural and simple one. His Majesty's ministers do not believe that the colonies will oppose them. The men upon whose reports they act have deluded them into the belief that the opposition is feeble and localized. But you know, my lord, and I know, that the colonists will oppose the troops of England to the death.

"Let the thirteen colonial governors tell Lord North the truth. Tell him that his armies can kill, but cannot convince, the colonists,—that his insistence will but produce an orgy of blood and hate and suffering.

"Make a full report of the actual conditions in Virginia, my lord, and forward it at once to the king. Report to the other colonial governors what you have

done, and urge them to do the same thing. Insist upon them that it is the only means of averting useless bloodshed. The name of Murray is too well known for slanderous tongues to attribute your frankness to cowardice or self-interest. England will believe you.

"Meanwhile, the colonial assemblies will, likewise, consult with one another, and decide to await the outcome of your efforts. While awaiting His Majesty's orders, Gage and his troops may remain in Massachusetts; and, provided they commit no outrage, there shall be peace. That is the only way left open: God forbid it be too late.

"I appeal to you, Lord Dunmore, in the name of Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic. It takes a brave man to recede from his former position; to admit that he was in error: but the house from which you come has never bred a coward. Will posterity say that the greatest of the Murrays built a greater England with the Atlantic a tiny lake in its centre?"

A breathless silence awaited the governor's answer, but he spoke no word.

Colonel Innisdale rose slowly from his seat. His steps were firm and measured, his head held high, and his eyes glinted with fight like the lion when it defies the world. He passed round the lower end of the long table, and held out his hand to the Englishman.

"Major Pressley," he said, "permit me to tender you my humble apology for any slight, coldness or indignity you may have suffered from any of my house."

Pressley wrung his hand warmly.

"They are forgotten, Colonel," he answered. "An Englishman cannot do more."

The episode, dramatic as it was unexpected, passed. Dunmore hardly seemed to notice it. Major Crawford turned to him.

"Virginia has had her say, my lord," he said. "She can suggest nothing more."

If the governor heard him, there was nothing to show it. Only his fitful eyes betrayed the struggle in his bosom. At last, he turned with a weary sigh.

"Colonel Innisdale, will you let us have pens and paper. Major Pressley will aid me to prepare such reports and letters as may serve the purpose. If this brings dishonor upon the name of Murray, heaven and Virginia be my witness, it is done in the interest of England."

The gentlemen slowly dispersed, conversing in little groups. The crisis had passed. North could not resist the arguments of his thirteen colonial governors, or, for that matter, of five; and there was no doubt that the majority, if not all of them, would follow Dunmore's lead.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WARRANT.

Conditions rapidly settled down to normal. All parties seemed satisfied with the proposed settlement, and the sturdy colonists felt that they had won a victory.

Dunmore kept his word, and at once sent letters to the governors of all the other colonies, as well as a frank report to the king. An order recalling the Assembly was issued, and Colonel Innisdale dispatched a messenger of his own to Philadelphia, to inform Henry and Pendleton and Washington and their companions of the success of their efforts. Throughout Virginia there was general rejoicing.

Perhaps there was only one man in the colony whose spirits did not share in the general elation. Arthur Pressley had thoroughly forgiven both Oliver and Colonel Innisdale, but he felt that his remaining longer at Innismount was useless and inconvenient. Miss Innisdale had yielded nothing to his suit, and he was conscious of the pain his reverting to the subject caused her. And his very presence was to her a reminder of what was uppermost in his heart. He felt that he must leave, and that now, when his star was in the ascendant, was the most fitting time.

Innisdale would not hear of his going, but the young man was determined. He had spent a wonderful time in Virginia, he said, but he had heard no word of Franklyn Everleigh. He intended to visit Philadelphia, New York and Boston, in the hope of finding the man he had sought for years. After that, he would return to England, and, probably, undertake a second African

expedition. He set his departure for Monday, a week ahead.

The messenger Innisdale had sent to Philadelphia had not yet returned. The double journey could not be accomplished in less than six days at the earliest; he was expected on Thursday.

Early that morning, Major Crawford came over to Innismount, anxious for the first news of the decision of the general Congress. It was three o'clock when the bearer arrived, horse and man barely able to drag themselves along. Alec led him into the colonel's office, where the two friends sat. There was a letter for the master.

Innisdale hastily tore the envelope open, and his face went pale as he read the few fateful lines. Dunmore's attempt at reconciliation had come too late. British troops had fired upon Massachusetts minute-men at Lexington, killing eight, and wounding ten others, then had tried to sack and burn Concord. The sword had, at last, been drawn in bitter earnest: over two hundred and fifty troops, and nearly a hundred colonists had been slain. Virginia, through her representatives in Congress, had promised five thousand men. Would Colonel Innisdale and his friends begin at once to arrange for such a force.

The old colonel silently handed the letter to Crawford, and, without a word, walked across to the open window. For fifteen minutes he stood there, gazing into space with clouded eyes, and Crawford knew him too well to venture a remark.

At length he turned with a deep sigh.

"I had rather drawn my sword and plunged it into my own breast," he said, "than lift it against my king."

Crawford did not answer: the remark had hardly been intended for him. Innisdale poured himself a stiff glass of brandy from a flagon on the shelf, then pushed the liquor towards his friend.

There was another deathly pause. Innisdale rose at last.

"Come, Major; I'm ready," he said with a steady voice. "We are rebels. We have no country, and we have no king. May God help us."

"Innisdale," Crawford returned slowly, "you and I have fought by the side of British soldiers,—we were once British soldiers ourselves. War is their game. Nothing less than British soldiers can oppose them. No undisciplined Virginian rabble shall be meat to their slaughter. When we lead a company against them, it must be thoroughly trained, and fully equipped. What can you do?"

"I have no country, and no king," Innisdale repeated. "All I have is for the Cause. Innismount can raise three hundred men. All can shoot; a score of them have faced the enemy. The estate can equip a thousand others, if they can be found, and provision them for an indefinite period."

"There are a hundred white men on my plantation," said Crawford. "That's four hundred, the nucleus of an army. To-morrow we'll assemble them. Perry's Crossing, on the far end of my estate, is an excellent site for a camp; easy for volunteers to reach. I shall undertake their training, if you'll let me. The word must be sent broadcast."

"I shall dispatch messengers at once," Innisdale answered. "Every available man is necessary. Word must also be sent to His Excellency that the action of Gage has cancelled our agreement. We must act like honorable Englishmen, even if we are no longer that."

Details were soon arranged with a precision which only the military training of the two leaders made possible. Before night-fall, the rebellion in Virginia had taken definite form, and messengers had been sent to the principal leaders throughout the colony, giving them the instructions from Philadelphia, and the plans afoot.

Dunmore, who had already been apprised of the clash at Lexington, replied to the colonel's letter frankly. Gage's action had, he admitted, nullified the letter of the agreement, but since its spirit had been to secure peace, and since the affair in Massachusetts had taken place before word of that agreement could have reached Boston, he urged Innisdale and his friends still to maintain the peace. England might disavow Gage's rash act, and make reparation; while any sort of a rising in Virginia would at once make such a thing impossible. The mere assembling of colonial troops without the governor's sanction, he pointed out, could not be accepted in England but as an act of treason.

Long before the governor's reply could be received, however, the "treason" of the Virginian leaders had been an accomplished fact. Early next morning work had been commenced on the encampment at Perry's Crossing, and, from various quarters of the colony recruits were pouring in, most of them hardy fighters who had not yielded to the French, the Indians or the wilderness.

No man felt more keenly the acuteness of the situation than the Governor of Virginia. He well saw the wholeheartedness with which the colonists rose, and knew that he was powerless to oppose them. Yet, as the king's representative, it was his duty to maintain order and loyalty. The available supply of gun-powder he had already secured, yet this served little purpose. He could not make up his mind what new step to take.

It was at this juncture that his course was destined to be directed by a will stronger than his own, and by a mind less scrupulous. The man who was to give the initial impulse to the impending catastrophe was no other than the wily Johnson Culberson.

Culberson reached the governor's palace on Saturday morning, and at once sought an interview with Dunmore.

"Why, Mr. Culberson," said the governor, "I did not

expect to see you in Williamsburg at this time. When last heard of, you were scalping Indians up in the mountains.''

''True, my lord,'' Culberson answered with a suave bow, ''but when, nearer to the seat of government, there are traitors with blacker hearts, and baser designs against their sovereign, my sword is ever at the service of my master. I have come, my lord, to volunteer my services.''

''You are, indeed, welcome,'' the governor replied, ''for never was Virginia in sorer need of loyal Englishmen. Yet, what can we do?''

''What can we do?'' retorted Culberson with a sneer that was intended to be caustic without being impolite. ''What can we do, when traitorous demagogues preach vile treason at every country cross-roads; when malevolent leaders assemble a base gang of the rabble of Virginia on their estates, to learn to march and shoot? My lord, it is not for a humble subject to say what you should do; but whatever it is should be done before the rebellion becomes organized.''

''Yet, Mr. Culberson,'' returned Dunmore, ''any hasty act on our part may but precipitate the conflict. We are still hoping to settle our differences.''

''It cannot be done, my lord,'' Culberson answered. ''Has Virginia learnt nothing from Boston? The ringleaders there might have been easily secured a year ago, and the resistance broken up, but Gage hesitated in the hope of a reconciliation, and when at last he was forced to act, he found organized resistance with which he has been unable to deal. And Gage led trained British troops.''

''Just so,'' said Dunmore. ''How much worse, then, should we fare, with only militia, whose loyalty is open to doubt?''

''Yet, Your Excellency, the opposition in Virginia is not yet organized, as it will soon be, if given the chance.

There is but one influential leader in the colony, with three or four willing and misguided lieutenants in his hands. Get them out of the way, and the rabble will immediately disperse.''

''You refer to Innisdale,'' said the governor. ''I forgot that there was some unpleasant passage between you.''

''My own injuries are forgotten in the service of my king,'' Culberson answered. ''And, indeed, I have a tender spot in my heart for the kind, but hot-headed, old man. Yet, were he my own brother, I could not excuse his actions. His Majesty's representative cannot sit still, deterred by considerations of personal regard, while his enemies prepare force to oppose the king's orders.''

''It is not the consideration of personal regard that deters me,'' replied the governor. ''I hesitate to take the awful responsibility for possible blood-shed, when there is any other chance of a settlement.''

''It is blood-shed that I am urging your lordship to forestall,'' said Culberson. ''It is kindness to Colonel Innisdale and his handful of misguided followers that I am suggesting. Seize the ring-leaders now, and the rebellion will be thwarted. Before they can come to trial, the country will be at peace. This, with the influence the colonel possesses both in Virginia and in England, and your own good word, will probably secure him his liberty on his promise of good behavior, and your prompt action will have prevented a tragedy.''

''There is reason in your argument,'' said the wavering Dunmore. ''But, can we be sure that the arrest of Innisdale and Crawford would put an end to the discontent? There are others as radical as they.''

''True, my lord,'' Culberson admitted. ''In every pack, there are always mongrels who yap loud and long, but have no grip. Innisdale has more influence than any other man in Virginia to-day. What is even more

important, he has the wealth to make his threats good. Randolph, Washington and Henry are in Philadelphia, and may easily be seized. Take Innisdale and Crawford, with the English malcontent, Pressley, who is edging them on to rebellion, hold the estates of these leaders in the authority of the Crown, and you deprive the rascals of any means of sustenance. A rebellion cannot succeed without funds."

Dunmore puckered his brow in deep thought.

"If I knew that this could be done," he said at length, "if I knew that it would secure peace, I should have no alternative but attempt it. Yet, heaven be my witness, I should, in the end, try to save Innisdale at the risk of my own head, and to see his property returned to him. He has been a gentleman, and my friend."

"It can be done, my lord," urged Culberson. "Take the colonel quietly at his home, disperse his gang, and hold him till the country is quiet. It is the only course left to you if you would do your duty to your king. Colonel Innisdale is also my friend, and I am indebted to him for many benefits which I shall not forget, but I cannot let my own feelings stand between me and my loyalty to my sovereign."

"It is a difficult task," said the governor with a sigh. "Innisdale is a soldier, with a quick temper, and draws his sword hastily. I doubt whether he would suffer arrest quietly."

"If Your Excellency would entrust me with the mission," said Culberson, "I should undertake to carry it out to your satisfaction. It would be a painful duty, but duty is always painful; and no one can know the colonel better than I do."

"I could not do that, Culberson, highly as I value your loyal offer," Dunmore replied. "You have been his servant. England, as well as Virginia, would abhor the indignity."

"You are super-sensitive, my lord," Culberson an-

swered,—"too keenly Virginian to be thoroughly British. Innisdale, though what might be termed an aristocrat of Virginia if there were such a thing, is of no better blood than I; and the trifling distinction of circumstances cannot be recognized in England. A loyal soldier of the king certainly might do his duty without enquiring into the lineage of every traitor he confronts. Shall your lordship report to England that you allowed the rebellion to acquire impetus because you did not have earls and dukes to arrest the ring-leaders? The situation, my lord, is one which warrants immediate action. A day or two may turn discontent into open revolt, and before troops can be transported from England, irretrievable mischief may be done. Of course, I cannot direct your lordship's policy. I but offer the devoted service of a loyal Englishman; if you have a servant more trustworthy, or better able to accomplish the difficult task, I am willing to yield my place to him."

Dunmore pulled fiercely at his mustaches.

"Culberson," he said at length, "I have half a mind to try the remedy you suggest. The situation in Virginia is becoming desperate, and the governor cannot allow private individuals in the colony to raise and equip their own armies. It were a dangerous precedent, even were the end peaceful. England shall not say John Murray failed in his duty to his sovereign."

"It is the only course left open to you, my lord," the other answered. "And you'll honor me with the commission?"

Dunmore tried to read the green, shifty eyes. Culberson was, plainly, eager to undertake the task; yet, it was perfectly natural that a loyal and ambitious Englishman should wish to render some conspicuous service to his king; and, if his plans went right, this would be the only chance.

"I shall not deny you the honor," he said, "but only on one condition. There must be no violence. Neither

Colonel Innisdale nor any of his friends must suffer any injury or indignity; and Miss Innisdale must not be molested nor inconvenienced.''

''Your wishes shall be executed to the letter, my lord,'' Culberson answered. ''I promise on the word of an Englishman. You will give me a warrant for the colonel's arrest.''

''It shall be prepared immediately,'' said the governor. ''And England shall know with what fidelity you served your king.''

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FAREWELL.

Let not the bitter hate of succeeding years becloud the issues that lay behind the conflict which separated England from her American colonies. It was an inevitable step in the evolution of British freedom.

Had Columbus never left his modest Genoese home, the War of American Independence would have been fought in Devon, or Kent, or Yorkshire. Twice before, British monarchs had tried to stem the tide of freedom. On the first occasion, the English people summoned John of Anjou to Runnymeade, and the only Plantagenet who was both weakling and coward, and whose single virtue was craftiness, saw too well the temper of his clients to haggle long over terms.

The second occasion was more disastrous. Charlie Stuart stood in the path of the descending avalanche, determined to block its course. But the avalanche rolled heedlessly on, and, for a time, England had no king.

The ascension to the British throne of any sovereign who desired to curb the ever-growing freedom of his subjects, was bound to produce another crisis; and when the third George proved such a monarch, and surrounded himself with weak-willed courtiers, and advisers eager to flatter their king and pander to his vain lust for power, the stage seemed set for the final scene. That the first clash came in that Britain which was farthest from the seat of government, but saved the royal dynasty of England.

Here was no international strife. Here was a struggle in which Englishmen like William Pitt, and Matthew Innisdale, and Lord Rockingham, and George Washing-

ton, and Edmund Burke, and Patrick Henry, differed honestly from other Englishmen like Lord North, and Lord Dunmore, and Lord Thurlow, and Lord Gower, and Samuel Johnson, and Francis Bernard; while still other Englishmen, like Charles Lee, and Johnson Culberson, and Benedict Arnold, thought nothing of principle, and strove only for their own selfish ends.

Two events of later date were to dignify the conflict with an appearance of internationalism. The first was when the autocratic Brunswick who wore the crown Europe had learnt to respect upon the mightier brows of Coeur-de-Lion and Elizabeth Tudor, finding that Englishmen declined to butcher Englishmen at his demand, hired an army of his own countrymen to chastise his British subjects.

The second, and deciding, event was when France, England's natural foe for seven centuries, drew the sword to aid the rebelling colonists. Then it was that the lethargic Englishman of England, scenting his habitual enemy as a cat might smell a mouse, yawned from his repose, stretched himself lazily, and, reaching his rifle where it lay rusting on its hook, trooped off to his accustomed deeds of valor, under the banner of Coote, or of Hastings, or of Rodney; but not of Clinton and Cornwallis and Howe, who slaughtered his own countrymen.

As yet, there could be no thought of the separation of Englishmen from the government of England. True, a few of the most hot-headed and irresponsible radicals called out for a colonial government in which Westminster was disregarded; but so, for countless centuries, hot-headed men had denounced their rulers when out of earshot, and then returned to voiceless submission. The wisest men on both sides of the ocean felt that one side, or both, must eventually yield, the trouble be, somehow, patched up, and the machinery of government once more proceed in its accustomed manner.

Such an one was Arthur Pressley. He knew that the government must yield in the end, since the rebels dared not yield, and he could see no reason why the tension should be allowed to continue.

Plans for his departure from Innismount had been completed. He had so far modified his programme as to decide to hurry at once to Boston. Gage must by this time have received Dunmore's communication. Pressley hoped to convince him of the wisdom of the governor's course, and to prevail upon him to disavow the action of Pitcairn, withdraw his troops, and make peace with the people, or, at least, a truce, till he could learn His Majesty's pleasure.

Supper that last Sunday evening was sad and silent. Oliver was in camp at Perry's Crossing, where every able-bodied white man on the plantation had been mustered; and the three who sat at the quiet table had each his own problem to occupy his mind.

Pressley explained his plan to visit General Gage's headquarters.

"Any scheme which may produce honorable peace is worth trying," Innisdale answered calmly, "but I confess I have little faith in Gage. While our reports of the clash in Massachusetts are incomplete, every indication is that the troops are following careful directions. Even Gage can hardly retrace his steps now without orders from Lord North, and North can only do that by discrediting Gage. The volunteers of Virginia must be kept ready for any development."

"Keep them ready, by all means, Colonel," said Pressley, "but, for heaven's sake, do nothing rash. Get all the details of the situation in Massachusetts before you take the final step."

"We shall do nothing," Innisdale replied, "till we have word from Philadelphia. Colonel Washington is a man of experience: we shall expect leadership from him."

"And if it come to open rebellion, Major Pressley," Beatrice asked with an interest she failed to conceal, "if your efforts at mediation fail, and the sword be actually drawn, what shall you do?"

Pressley looked into the tender black eyes, as if for direction.

"If it come to war, Miss Innisdale,—if England fight against Englishmen, what should an English soldier do?"

She flushed, as if the words conveyed a hidden meaning.

"Your duty," she faltered back. "Let honor be your guide. Another cannot advise you."

He sat silent, lost in thought. No one spoke: but new dreams had been awakened,—three new dreams.

Colonel Innisdale rose from the table.

"You will permit me," he said. "I have important matters to arrange, and after that a long conference with Wilson. If you care to join us in the office later, Major Pressley, or both of you, you may do so. Otherwise, we shall meet in the morning before you leave."

Pressley and Miss Innisdale also rose. It was the first evening they had been left so completely to themselves. The freedom was embarrassing.

The Englishman stopped her as she moved in the direction of the parlor.

"Miss Innisdale," he said, "this is the last time I shall see you, for I shall be away in the morning before you are up. Is the garden forbidden?"

Her lips quivered, but framed no word. The color came and went in her cheeks. She swayed lightly, steadied herself, then offered her arm.

He led her gently down the stairs and across the lawn. The full Virginian moon shone down on them as brightly as it had done on that night ages ago,—or was it yesterday?—when their lips had touched, and he had dreamt his heaven had come.

They reached the garden gate, and entered. The

ground felt holy to his tread. He led her towards a seat half-hidden among clustering roses.

"Not there," she pleaded softly. "Please. Let me forget."

She pointed to the denser shade, where his eyes might not read hers. He went.

He sat beside her, but his heart was pulsing too strongly for him to speak now,—as he would speak. She welcomed his silence.

"Miss Innisdale," he said at length, when he felt that his voice would be strong enough to be level, "you have made my stay in Virginia extremely happy. I wish I knew how I might thank you."

"Don't try." Her voice sounded unnatural to her in spite of all her efforts. She hoped he would not notice it. "Don't try. I have got more out of it than you."

"No," he answered almost soberly. "I know my presence has made you miserable these last weeks. I know it is not fair for me to remain to inflict a torture upon you which you are too generous to resent. I am sorry I love you—no, by heaven, I'm not sorry for that;—I'm sorry I can't conceal my love, and that the knowledge of it makes you unhappy. But we part friends."

"Friends." She whispered the word dreamily, and laid her hand in his. "We part friends. I shall ever remember that."

"It will ever be my happiest thought in the dreary days that are ahead," he answered.

"Why dreary, my friend?" she chided. "Forget this mad chapter in your life. You have talent, courage, wealth. Forget the cruel, heartless child who toyed with your noble affection, then tossed it back to you crumpled and broken. Forgive and pity, but do not remember her. Seek another worthier of you."

"Hush, Beatrice!" He tried in vain to check her self-accusation. "You are not that. Do you think I'm

blind? That which separates us is not you, but fate. Beatrice, I know you care. I must not stay to tempt you to dishonor.''

She shuddered, though the night was warm.

''I should not have come,'' she said. ''I did not know I was so weak,—and so selfish.''

''I shall take you back now, dear; and perhaps I shall never see you again. But I want you to make me one promise before we part. It is this: Should the condition which holds us apart ever cease to exist, whenever or wherever that may be, send me a word. I shall keep in touch with your father or your brother, and it will be easy for you to learn where I am. You will not think it demeaning, dear. Please promise me.''

''I promise,'' she answered. ''But do not wait for, nor expect, such a word. It will never come. And now, my friend, good-bye. May heaven make you happy, and keep you the noble, pure and generous friend you have proved yourself to an unfortunate girl.''

He pressed her quivering hand in his. It was cold and nerveless. He could not see her half-averted face, but he heard the sharp hissing of her breath, and saw the quick rising and falling of her bosom. He knew she suffered, knew she loved him, knew fate between them was inflexible; and he loved her more, because she loved honor rather than her own happiness. He could not draw out her suffering longer. He pressed his warm lips to the hand he held, and rose silently.

She hesitated, as if too weak to stand. He helped her to her feet, and turned towards the house.

He saw her eyes in the brighter moonlight, dry and sparkling. Her lips were tightly compressed; her cheeks were ashy pale,—ghastly where the moonbeams struck.

The long and plaintive waul of a cat broke the dead silence. She shivered, and turned her head from his gaze. Another cat answered the call, then all was still; save the measured crunching of their feet upon the

pebbled walk, and the mad pulsing of their two hearts that could not live without each other, yet could not live together for that which lay between them.

She could not trust her lips to speak. She reached the door, and once more put forth her hand for him to kiss, but she kept her gaze averted. She ascended the stairs slowly as if in pain, carefully protecting her hallowed hand from contact with baser things. She reached her room, and slammed the door behind her. She raised the hand, and pressed against her lips the burning spot his parting kiss had consecrated. Her self-control burst with a snap. A torrent of tears welled from her heart.

This was what HONOR meant to her;—a broken heart; a wound time could never heal.

CHAPTER XL.

TRAPPED.

During the weeks following the arrival from England of Oliver Innisdale and his friend, Fanny Morgan found her immediate attendance on her mistress less indispensable.

Hardly regarded as a slave by Beatrice, she soon found that this change of situation left her with an unusual amount of leisure, for which she had little use. Most of this she devoted to any of the negroes who happened to be ill, while she was also able to spend more time with the young children.

The friendship between her and Fidelia had ripened considerably, and, even in the Great House, Pearl was often her companion. But the warmest attachment she had made was to the devoted Renjy, now known as Sambo to all on the estate.

The dog-like devotion of Renjy to his former mistress had never changed. She was still the Princess of Kubanda to him; and never by word or action did he attempt to remind her of the change which had come between them, nor offered towards her any familiarity which the society of Bakinji could have resented. Every negro on the plantation knew that Sambo and Miss Fanny were good friends and nothing more.

A field-slave, it was not the lot of Renjy to see visitors to Innismount except by accident; and Fanny had never informed him that the white man he had conducted to the coast,—the white man who was the indirect cause of his own captivity,—was now a guest there. She feared that the lad, in an effort to save her from her fate, might disclose her identity to Pressley; and this

humiliation she was unable to bear. It was, therefore, with relief that she learnt from her mistress that the Englishman was preparing to depart.

On the Sunday evening when the three sat to their gloomy supper,—the last supper that Pressley should eat at Innismount,—Fanny Morgan was not needed in the dining-room, and leisurely strolled the grounds. Soon she saw little Pearl running towards her.

"Mummy want 'oo, Miss Fan'," lisped the child. "Come wid me."

She had not seen Fidelia for several days. She took the girl in her arm, and walked towards the modest cabin at the far end of the settlement. Fidelia met her at the door.

"W'a's come o' you, Miss Fanny?" she asked. "I ain't seen you now never so long."

"Oh, just busy," Fanny answered, "and trying not to make you tired of me. Our visitor will be going to-morrow, and then I shall have still less time."

"Oh la! An' I been gwine beg you spen' ti-night wid me," said Fidelia. "I ain't feelin' so well nor never."

"I'm sorry," Fanny replied. "I can spend a couple of hours, but I must return, lest I'm wanted. Come let me put you to bed. I shall look after the children."

"Lawks, Miss Fanny, I ain't so bad as all dat. But do, stay wid me dis one night, Miss Fanny; I can't let you go back, now you's come."

"Why, Fidelia, you know I couldn't stay without Miss Betty's permission. And I couldn't ask that without good reasons."

"Miss Fanny, you been kind to me, an' I want to be kind to you." Fidelia spoke with a fierceness which belied her proffer of kindness. "But ef you don't stay wid me ti-night, I ain't nebber gwine speak to you no mo'."

Fanny Morgan looked up at the woman questioningly.

"What is it you fear, Fidelia?" she asked. "Tell me. Is *he* coming back?"

"No, no; not dat. He is kind—now—to me. I don't fear him. It is for you I fear."

"For me? How? What?"

"I dunno. I jes' fear, dat's all. You'll stay?"

"You haven't told me all, Fidelia; and that's not being kind."

"Laws 'a' massy, Miss Fanny, I can't tell you nothin'. They'll kill me ef they ever knowed a word of it crossed my blessed lips."

"*They'll* kill you, Fidelia? Who is *they?*"

"Mass'r Culberson, an' my half-brother Jack, an' a whole bunch o' niggers an' po' whites," cried Fidelia in real terror.

"Culberson?" gasped Fanny. "Has he been here?"

"Yes," Fidelia answered, the truth wrung from her. "They's been here planning 'bout it. Ti-night them gwine surround the home house, an' kill eberybody what in it; an' I don't want them to kill you."

"But why? What for?" Fanny demanded.

"I dunno," said Fidelia. "I been listenin' troo the crack o' the do', and dat's all I caughted."

"Then I must go," Fanny declared. "I must warn Miss Betty; I must save her."

"Please don't go back, Miss Fanny," cried Fidelia, clutching to the girl's skirt. "Them is white people, an' ef them dead I don't loss nothin'; but ef you dead, I loss the one frien' me an' my po' pickaninnies hab. An' ef you tell her, them is gwine know dat I tol' you, an' them gwine kill me sho'."

"Don't fear, Fidelia," said Fanny, loosening the woman's hold of her dress. "They shall never know that you saved us, and the mistress will reward you."

"Please, Miss Fanny, please——"

A loud rap at the locked door cut short her entreaty.

"For Gawd's sake," she cried, as her wild eyes rolled

helplessly around the room, "dere's Mass'r Culberson now. In the back room, Miss Fanny, quick; don't never let him fin' you here. He'll soon be gone. Yes, sah, I is comin', sah," she continued as the knock was repeated more imperatively. "I is jes' puttin' Astrodoffogel to bed."

Fanny Morgan darted into the dark inner room, and a second later she heard the door opened to admit Johnson Culberson. She found herself in a small chamber, piled with all kinds of litter and rubbish; with no window, and only the single door by which she had entered. Near the door she brushed against a beer-barrel; her foot touched a small keg, possibly of nails; boards and logs leaned against the walls: in the farther corner she crouched behind a pile of empty boxes.

"Your brother not here yet?" she heard Culberson's gruff voice ask.

"No sah," Fidelia answered. "But he said he would be 'round."

"Come sit on my knee, girl, and kiss me. Haven't you been longing to see me?"

"I do be long, Mass'r Culberson, sah," Fidelia stammered. "But—but Jack may be in any minute."

"Nonsense! Close the door; he must wait——"

She felt mean, crouching in the darkness there, listening to the words she was not intended to hear. And she would rather be flying across the lawn to her mistress with word of her impending danger. But there was no way out.

"God, Fidelia," growled Culberson, "I'm sorry you're a nigger. If you weren't, so help me, girl, you'd be something some day. Ah, well, what's the use? Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, nor a duchess out of a black wench. But, so help me, girl, you're going to be proud of your son some day, if you ever hear about him. I'll bring him up a man, if the whole dashed world stands in the way."

"What?" gasped Fidelia. "You gwine tek my baby from me, sah?"

"I'm going to take him away," Culberson answered, "and bring him up like a white man's son, and give him a white man's name, and nobody shall ever know that his grand-mother was as black as the queen of hell."

He stooped above the sleeping babe, and softly stroked the long, jet-black hair.

"Sleep, boy," he said gently. "You'll wake to-morrow the son of a man whose future is assured."

His voice sounded almost kind. Fanny Morgan wondered whether there could be, after all, a tinge of humanity in this coarse brute.

There came another knock; the door opened, and a third voice joined theirs.

"Ah, Jack, here you are at last," said Culberson. "Got everything fixed?"

"Eb'ryt'ing ready, sah," Jack answered, "an' we waitin' fe orders."

Culberson turned to the girl.

"Leave us now, Fidelia. Jack and I have important matters to arrange."

She slid from the room, and closed the door behind her. But a convenient crack served her purpose sufficiently.

Jack was an under-grown, prematurely aged, rat-faced mulatto, with a broad, flat forehead, deeply creased. His small, sinister gray eyes held a malicious gleam, and his narrow, thin-lipped mouth curved with a wicked sneer. He waited for his employer to speak.

"Well, how many niggers did you secure?" Culberson asked when the door had closed behind Fidelia.

"Twenty, sah," Jack answered. "All good men."

"Twenty?" gasped Culberson. "Out of more than three hundred on the estate. How is that?"

"I been keerful, sah, not to mention de matter to no

one what am likely to betray we plans to de marster. Twenty will be 'nuff.''

''Enough,'' Culberson answered, ''if we can keep the others from meddling. I have a dozen, and they are all white men, who have tasted Indian blood. You promised these men their freedom?''

''Yes, sah; jis' lak you tol' me. All what helps in dis undertakin' an' keeps dere tongues shut am to be free to-morrow marnin'; an' w'en you tek charge o' de plantation, I is to be de oberseer.''

''Good, Jack. I shan't forget. Now, the first thing is to see that the others don't help Innisdale to resist us.''

''Dem can't resist, sah,'' Jack declared. ''We got dem soft, an' dem won't know nuttin' tell dem fin' demself tie up.''

''Now, listen carefully to my instructions, Jack,'' said Culberson slowly. ''First, go to every negro cabin on the estate, except those of the twenty men you have engaged. Say that Wilson has sent you to inform them that he understands some of the slaves are planning to escape. Tell them he has men on guard all around, and any negro who leaves his cabin during the night, no matter for what reason, will be shot at sight without question. Make that good and strong; we don't want them to come out against us.''

''All right, sah. I do dat right away.''

''After that,'' Culberson continued, ''get your men together, and keep them behind your cabin till eleven o'clock;—you have the watch I gave you?''

''Yes, sah.'' Jack grinned, and produced the trinket. '' 'Leben o'clock is when de han' come yah an' yah?''

''Right, Jack. When the hands come here and here,'' —he pointed to the figures on the dial as Jack had done, —''bring your men quietly to the big tree back of the garden. I shall be waiting there for you.''

''Yes, sah. An' arter dat?''

''I shall tell you then,'' Culberson answered thought-

fully. "I shall probably let you make the arrest. If I send a white man, Innisdale may come quietly, and I don't want him to do that."

"You don't want him fe come, sah?"

"Certainly not," Culberson returned sharply. "Take Innisdale to Williamsburg, and the silly governor would liberate him in a few hours. They must offer resistance, and both Innisdale and his visitor must be killed by accident."

"His visitor, sah? You mean de Englishman, Major Pressley?"

"Yes," Culberson nodded. "Pressley must not escape. He is the worst of the bunch. Miss Innisdale must be taken unhurt. I have made arrangements for getting her away. Impress those points on your men. If any one of them miscarries, we lose all."

"Yes, sah. But you tol' me de gubnor says you am not to harm Colonel Innisdale."

Culberson laughed harshly.

"Never mind that, Jack," he said. "Poor Dunmore will be so busy dodging the colonel's friends that he won't have time to vent his wrath on us. I shall take immediate possession of the estate in the name of Miss Innisdale, who shall beg for the protection of the hand she spurned; and possession, you know, is nine points of the law."

"Yes, sah. But 'bout Major Pressley. How come him in dis?"

The scowl of vindictive malice which shot across Culberson's brow was too deep for the shallow Jack to read.

"He must die," snapped the white man; "he above all, or everything is spoilt. Whatever happens, don't let Pressley escape. You showed your niggers how to handle a gun?"

"Yes sah. I tek dem in de woods, an' showed dem jis' lak you showed me. But de powder what you guv us am done."

"That's all right, Jack. I have a small keg of powder in the back room there. Bring it with you when you come. That will be more than enough. Who sleep in the great house to-night?"

"Dere's Colonel Innisdale, sah, an' de white Englishman, an' Miss Betty, an' de two white maids, an' Uncle Alec, an' Aunt 'Lizbeth, an' Fanny Morgan. Dat's all."

"Fine," said Culberson. "That Fanny Morgan is good game for you, Jack. If you can take her alive, she may be sent away with her mistress, and she shall be your share of the spoils. There's another thing I want you to tell your men. The buildings must not be damaged. If it is necessary to break down a window or door, that can easily be repaired, but nothing more. Above all, see that no fire is started. I do not want to take possession of a pile of blackened embers."

Crouching in her corner, Fanny Morgan listened to the fiend's plans with parted lips. Mention of the keg of gun-powder alarmed her. She remembered the small keg over which she had tripped. If they came to reclaim it, they would surely discover her; and there was no means of her getting out.

She felt her way gingerly towards the keg. Her hand found the cork, lightly inserted. She pulled it out, and applied her nostrils to the opening. Sure enough, it was gun-powder.

She sought for some safer place of concealment. Her hand touched the beer-barrel. A sudden thought seized her.

She caught up the dipper and filled it with the liquid, then emptied it into the powder keg. Again and again she poured beer into the powder, till the small cask overflowed. She rammed in the cork as tightly as she dared, then slunk back behind a pile of lumber.

"It's nine o'clock now," she heard Culberson say. "I

have other matters to arrange. Follow my instructions carefully, and don't forget the powder."

She heard the door opened, heard him speak a few words with Fidelia, heard his footsteps softly crunching the grass as he went.

"Ain't you is gwine too, Jack?" Fidelia asked as the other two re-entered the cabin.

"Presently," Jack replied. "I is gwine tek a little barrel in de back room fe Mass'r Culberson."

"Why not leave it, an' come back later?" she asked with apprehension. "It's so much trouble toting it all 'roun' with you."

"I is gwine tek it now," Jack responded. "Da's de orders, an' a man mus' allers obey orders."

"Oh, all right, Jack, you needn't get huffed," the girl answered. "I'll fetch it out for you."

"Now, Fidelia, you jes' don't tech dat dere keg," Jack expostulated sternly. "Females and childans should nebber handle dangerous combustiments. S'posen you let it explorate, what would I tell de marster?"

He seized a candle, and approached the farther room.

"Let me hold the candle for you, Jack," Fidelia urged. "It's dangerous."

"Gal, you leave me alone," Jack answered scornfully. "I knows what I is doin'."

He rested the candle on a box, took a deep pull from the beer barrel, and then lifted the powder keg.

But Fanny Morgan had overdone her work. The keg, wet from her recent ministrations, slipped from the man's fingers. He sprang back to save his toes, staggered, steadied himself against the pile of lumber, and brought down the whole pile. Fanny Morgan stood exposed.

"Wha' you doin' yah, you Fanny Morgan?" Jack gasped. "Listenin' to wha' we says?"

"What you and Culberson say can concern me little," Fanny answered calmly. "I wished to avoid meeting

him, and came in here when he arrived. Your talk can be none of my business.''

''You lie; gosh dang it, you lie,'' roared Jack. ''You am in yah spyin' on we. But you won't nebber go back to tell wha' you hear. We is gwine kill all o' you, an' I might jis' as well begin right yah.''

He drew a long knife from his belt, and poised it over the girl, grinning with fiendish venom.

Fanny Morgan did not flinch. Her eyes seemed to read and challenge the weak-willed, vacillating creature before her.

''If you think,'' she said firmly, with a taunting smile, ''it will gain you anything to kill your best friend and one of your own people to win the favor of Johnson Culberson, strike. When you have served his purpose, he will treat you in the same way.''

''You lie,'' Jack snorted. ''When de ol' traitor dead, an' Mass'r Culberson tek de estate an' de young missus, I is to be de oberseer.''

''An' you is to get her, too, Jack,'' Fidelia reminded pleadingly. ''Is you gwine kill your share o' the bargain?''

''Yeh,'' Jack answered, scratching his little round head in perplexity, while the furrows across his brows sank deeper, ''but when I lets her go back an' tell dem, we all ain't gwine get nuttin'.''

''She won't go back, Jack; I promise you that,'' said Fidelia. ''She will stay here with me till eberything ober, then you come for her.''

''Ef you swear to dat,'' said Jack, seeing a way out of his dilemma, ''an' ef you swear dat you wi' come to me arter dat, mebbe I could let you stay. Dem say you nebber bruk you wud.''

He peered at her questioningly, his small gray eyes blinking fiercely. Fanny Morgan turned her head away. To remain here while this horror should come upon Miss

Betty unheralded; to submit weakly to such a fate after that? Rather death a thousand times!

"Please let me go, Jack," she urged, humbled to entreaty but not to deception. "I have things in my room which I must recover."

"You'll get dem arterwards," the man answered sternly. "I is not sich a fool, Fanny Morgan. Either you do what I says, or I'll——"

He brandished his knife threateningly.

"I cannot stay," she answered with cool determination.

"Den, gosh dang it, dere's gwiner be one nigger less in Virginy——"

He raised the gleaming knife with malicious fury, but Fidelia sprang forward and caught the extended arm.

"Now, you listen here, Jack," she cried with flashing eyes, "Fanny Morgan is my frien', an' comed here to see me. Befo' you does anything to her, you got to kill me dead on the spot; then you see what you get from Mass'r Culberson. Now, them's my final wuds, an' you'll see I means to keep them."

"But what is I gwiner do, Fidelia?" Jack asked with indetermination. "Ef I lets de gal go back, eberyt'ing spoil, an' Mass'r Culberson gwine blame me for it."

"Let her go," said Fidelia. "She will not repeat what she heard. Won't you promise that, Fanny?"

The girl hesitated for an instant. To be unable to warn her mistress was little better than be kept from her entirely.

Jack looked questioningly at her.

"You swear dat ef I lets you go," he asked, "you am not gwiner mention to Colonel Innisdale, nor Miss Betty, nor anybody in de house, wha' you hear we talk 'bout in yah ti-night?"

"I promise," she answered softly.

" 'Member," he said with a wicked leer, "ef you bruk you wud, dere's nebber nuttin' gwine sabe you from dis

knife. An' when I tek you, you wi' 'member dat I been kin' to you.''

She looked up at him with proud scorn.

''You have the word of a pure-blooded Zandey,'' she answered. ''That shall deter me; not the wrath of a half-breed.''

She kissed Fidelia, kissed the two sleeping babes, and silently left the cabin.

CHAPTER XLI.

LOVE SUPREME.

Fanny Morgan walked swiftly to the house. In the garden she heard the low voices of Beatrice and the Englishman; Alec, 'Lizbeth and two white servants were in the kitchen; in the colonel's office she saw him busily engaged with Wilson, the overseer.

She hurried through, and entered her master's bedroom. She pulled a drawer open, closed it again, and darted from the room and from the house. She crossed the lawn, and reached a clump of trees not far from the negro settlement. Here she paused, and uttered a low, guarded sound in faithful imitation of the waul of a cat. A minute later, an answering waul came from the interior of the settlement. She waited, eyes and ears alert.

A figure appeared, walking leisurely across the grounds. She gave a low hiss. The figure sensed direction, and bounded to her side.

"What is it, my lady?" he whispered in the tongue of his distant country. "You are in danger. That is the old call of our homeland."

"Renjy," said Fanny in a low voice, "in the old days, you were the swiftest messenger in Kubanda. Have your feet lost their wings?"

"They have not, my lady. In your service, I shall leave the swallow far behind."

"It is fifteen miles to Perry's Crossing," said the girl. "Can you do it in the hour?"

Renjy thought for a minute.

"A spell more, perhaps," he answered. "But I shall do it in less time than any other man in Virginia could."

She shook her head impatiently.

"The riders will take half an hour to come," she said. "They must be here by eleven. It is now half-past nine."

"What is your errand, my mistress? I shall do whatever man may do."

"Fly there," said the girl. "Show this to any one who would stop you on the way, and he will let you pass. It is the master's signet ring. Guard it safely, and give it back to me on your return, or, failing to find me, give it to my mistress or my master, and say how you got it.

"Hurry to Major Crawford,—he is in camp at the Crossing. Tell him Fanny Morgan sent you; he has faith in me. Tell him this evening I overheard a plot on the life of my master. The governor has given Culberson a warrant for Colonel Innisdale's arrest. Culberson says that if the master is arrested, the governor will soon set him free; therefore, he and his English visitor must be slain, Miss Betty taken prisoner to Culberson, and the entire estate turned over to him. He has a company of twelve white men and twenty negroes, all fully armed, and the attack is set for eleven."

"And the master?——" Renjy asked.

"The master will not know until the attack falls," the girl answered. "They caught me where I listened, and would have killed me, until I promised not to repeat to anyone in my master's house what I had overheard. I cannot break my word, but I can tell it to you, for you are not one of the family. Go now, dear Renjy. Run as you never ran before, and you save me, too. When the spoils are divided, I am to fall to the lot of the little weazened mulatto they call Jack. Fly, my brother. The honor of Kubanda once more rests upon you. And if you never see me again, be satisfied that your sister died as a princess of our people should die, noble and unstained."

Almost before the sound of her voice had died away, the form of the fleet Renjy had disappeared. She stood for a moment gazing in the direction in which he had sped. So, too, had Pompey run when she had sent him with tidings of Miss Betty's fate. Yet, she knew Renjy.

She walked back to the cabins occupied by white servants. Only three men, she knew, were there; three too feeble to bear arms. The others were at Perry's Crossing, drilling for the conflict that was to come.

She knocked at the door of the aged blacksmith, and was admitted.

"Master Rockwell," she said, "the master will need you at a quarter of eleven. Bring your gun, and whatever ammunition you have."

"Huh!" Rockwell limped painfully across the floor, and placed a massive coal on his half-burnt pipe. "What kin the colonel want now? He took all my ammunition day before yestidday. However, I'll be there."

Fanny Morgan went on her way. She had often been the colonel's messenger, and as Innisdale had lately been making a thorough inventory of all arms on the plantation, there was nothing suspicious about her errand.

She visited the two other white men, delivered the same message, and received a similar assurance. She might have been able to secure the services of half-a-dozen faithful negroes, but she feared she might be seen in that section, and her plans guessed.

She returned to the house, and started to explore the barns and outhouses, in search of anything that might be of use; for she was impressed by the awful shortage of ammunition. One old blunderbus, discarded as useless, half-a-dozen rusty swords and a horn of powder rewarded her efforts. She brought them in stealthily, and concealed them in the dining-room.

It was after ten. She walked into the kitchen, but soon darted out again, leaving a promise to return. She meant to keep the house awake till after eleven,—without

betraying her secret. Pressley had joined Innisdale and Wilson in the library. She ascended to Miss Betty's room, and entered. Her mistress was seated at a table, lost in thought.

"Did you want me, Miss Betty?" she asked.

"No, Fanny. You needn't stay up for me. I can manage without you to-night."

"Please, Miss Betty, won't you let me put you to bed when you are ready?" she begged. "I shan't be going to bed for some time yet."

"All right," Beatrice answered carelessly. "Return in an hour. If I need you before, I shall ring."

She returned to the dining-room. That was where she expected the conflict. It had a wide double-door opening upon the moon-lit verandah, and four wide windows overlooking the lawn. A smaller rear door led through the pantry to the kitchen across the yard, while a third opened into a long hall-way that led, past the library and an unused sitting-room, to the parlor.

The windows, as was the custom, were protected by heavy wooden shutters. She bolted them carefully, all but one, at which she stood on watch. She crossed to the parlor, and locked the door by which it could be reached from the lawn; then returned to her post.

She saw Rockwell limp across the yard. She opened the door, and left him waiting in the pantry,—the master would see him in a few minutes.

Ricks and Walton, the two other men she had summoned, also arrived, both too feeble to be of much use in any emergency. Them, also, she left in the pantry, with the same excuse. She brought in Alec, 'Lizbeth and the two white maids from the kitchen, then carefully bolted the rear door. Nobody questioned her actions. Fanny Morgan always had Miss Betty's authority for whatever she did.

The clock boomed forth eleven sonorous notes. To the girl, it seemed the call of death. But she showed

no sign of emotion. She bolted the shutter of the single window she had left open, locked the door, and took her place beside it, ready for whatever might occur.

Ten minutes might have drifted by. She heard a footstep cross the lawn, heard it tread on the verandah. Came a rap at the door.

"Who is there?" she demanded calmly, without opening the door.

"A messenger to Colonel Innisdale," came the answer in a voice she had learnt to detest,—the voice of Jack.

"The master is engaged," she answered. "What is the message?"

"I hab," said Jack, repeating, parrot-like, the words that had been drilled into him, "de king's warrant—for de body of one Matthew Innisdale—a traitor to His Majesty's gubberment—to be taken to Williamsburg dead or 'live—an' delibered to His Majesty Gubner General—Signed Dunmore Gawd sabe de King."

"Wait a minute," said Fanny. "I shall deliver your message to my master."

She walked across to the library, where the three men were seated.

"If you please, my master," she said, "that mulatto they call Jack is at the door; and with him are twenty negroes and twelve white men, led by Master Culberson. He says that he has the king's warrant to take to Williamsburg the body of a traitor named Matthew Innisdale, dead or alive."

"What?" gasped Innisdale, white with rage. "Who dare——"

He sprang from his chair and darted towards the door.

"Don't go, my master, please," the girl begged. "They mean it."

He thrust her aside, and reached the door. Pressley and Wilson hurried after him. He pulled the door open. There was no one without. He took a single step.

A flash lighted a bush far out on the lawn. A tinge of fire crossed his face. A bullet sank into the door-post, and the report of a gun woke up the house.

Matthew Innisdale, the man who had won the reputation of possessing the hastiest temper in all Virginia, took one step back into the house, slowly closed the door behind him, turned to Pressley with a harsh laugh, and exhibited a long wale across his right cheek.

"Dunmore certainly employs competent assassins," he said. "He is a good marksmen who does this at ninety yards."

The three old men left in the pantry hastened to the door, the four servants waiting in the hall joined the number, and Beatrice ran down the stairs.

"What is it?" she asked eagerly. "I heard a gun."

"Dunmore's way of arresting me for treason," said Innisdale, pointing to his cheek. "What are you doing here?" he demanded as his eyes fell on the three the girl had summoned.

"Fanny Morgan said you wanted me at eleven," Rockwell answered, "and that I should bring gun and ammunition."

Innisdale's frown turned to the girl.

"Please forgive me, my master," said Fanny without waiting for his accusation. "I knew you'd need help, and these are the only white men left on the estate."

"Knew I'd need help?" stormed Innisdale. "Then you knew of this plot against my life?"

"Please, my master," answered the girl, "I overheard their plans, and would have warned you, but they caught me, and were about to kill me, until I promised not to repeat what I had heard. I could not break my word, but I have done whatever else I might."

"Who ever heard the likes?" gasped Innisdale, overcome. "She knew her master was to be murdered, yet, cowardly cur, she would not warn us! Girl, I'm going to teach you——"

Beatrice sprang to the girl's side, and threw a protecting arm around her.

"Fanny Morgan is no coward, and no cur," she retorted hotly. "Father, take back your unjust words, or apply them to your daughter. I do not know what all this means; but I know Fanny never acted dishonorably. Will you tell me all about it, dear?"

Fanny looked up into her mistress' trusting face.

"What I overheard I cannot tell," she answered. "I pleaded for life and freedom, in the hope that I might warn and save you, but only escaped after I had promised not to repeat to anyone in my master's house any word that I had heard. But I sent a messenger to Major Crawford with news of what was planned;—my promise did not forbid my telling him."

"How long ago was that," Pressley asked.

"At half-past nine," Fanny replied. "The major knows the attack is timed for eleven."

"It is fifteen miles to Perry's Crossing," Innisdale murmured. "The messenger may do it in three hours, and another for the return, if they come on the best horses. We must hold them off till two. Major Pressley, you are a leader of fighting men; what do you suggest? For my own part, I'd as soon yield to the warrant, and laugh at Dunmore to his face. He cannot hold me."

"True, Colonel," Pressley answered. "But you have not received a warrant; and the attempt just made shows what chance you would have of ever reaching Williamsburg. I think we can hold them off till Crawford comes."

"There are but three of us," said Wilson. "My old friends here can handle fire-arms, I know; but when it comes to swords, they can do little. And to swords it must eventually come: we have no ammunition."

"Here is a horn of powder that I found in one of the out-buildings," Fanny volunteered; "also some swords and a gun."

The colonel received the offering.

"By the way, girl, I did not mean to be unjust to you," he said, "and, of course, I know that you are not a coward. But, Major, we cannot remain cooped up in here without knowing what form the attack is likely to take. Open the windows."

"Only one, and that cautiously," Pressley warned. "It will be a target the moment it is opened."

He pushed the wooden shutter open, and almost at the same instant three bullets shattered the glass.

"Now let them waste their ammunition," he laughed, "while we talk over things."

"They haven't much to spare," Fanny confided to her mistress in a voice loud enough for all to hear. "I discovered their supply of powder,—a full keg,—and saturated it with beer. But they haven't found it out yet."

Pressley laughed heartily.

"Then we'll draw their fire," he said, "and let them burn up what they have."

He placed his hat on the point of his rifle, and pushed it over the edge of the window sill, so that it would look like some one peeping out. When he lifted it from the floor a second later, there were three bullet holes through the crown.

"They are wonderful marksmen, Colonel," he said with keen appreciation. "We must empty their pouches, or they'll be dangerous. Yet we must be cautious, and not give away the game."

A hasty stock of the supply of ammunition was taken. The urgent call for men at Perry's Crossing, and the necessity that those men should learn to shoot, had caused Innisdale to offer all he had. There were guns and swords, but little powder.

It is probable that if Culberson had made a sudden attack upon the mansion, it might have been taken with little resistance. It is difficult to say for what he waited. Perhaps it was because he planned death, rather than

capture, for those within. Perhaps it was just to satisfy his glut for cruelty that he chose first to torture those whom he would destroy. Probably he meant the occasion as a training for his band of ruffians: in the chaos he foresaw, he would certainly need a gang of trained and seasoned villains. Of course, he felt that he had all the time he needed. There was no neighbor to hear the firing and render assistance; the nearest residence was ten miles away. And he could not guess that one of his enemies knew his plans, for Fidelia had prevailed upon her brother to conceal from him the fact that he had caught and released the indomitable negress.

"We have," said Pressley when his survey was completed, "not more than twenty charges of ammunition. There are thirty-four men out there. We cannot waste one shot. If any one of us has the least doubt of his accuracy, it is safest for him to let the others have his portion."

For a moment there was a tense silence.

"Thirty years ago," said old Ricks in a tremulous voice, "I could hit a speeding deer at two hundred paces by the feel of my gun. I count it no dishonor, where all our lives may depend upon a single shot, to own that in the trembling moonlight my eyes are none too good."

"Rather it is an honor, Mr. Ricks," Pressley replied. "You are a true soldier, and a true Englishman. Anyone else?"

There was no other.

"Then we'll count out twenty of our adversaries," Pressley continued. "That leaves fourteen. Our swords must keep them back. They cannot hope to gain much by shooting at us from cover. We shall await the charge."

Had their supply of powder lasted, the villains might have remained under cover indefinitely, but their horns were soon emptied, and when they tried to replenish them, they discovered that the other was useless. Cul-

berson's vindictive oaths easily reached the house, but Jack persisted that he could not account for it. For the first time the rascal showed alarm. Whoever had tampered with the powder might also have taken other steps to thwart his plans. Haste was necessary.

Ten of his negroes, armed with axes, were dispatched to break down the door, while the few men who still had charges in their guns were to watch the window, now darkened, and protect the axemen.

Pressley had foreseen this move, and held his gunners ready, out of range of the sharp-shooters, yet within an angle across which the men must pass. He waited till the party mounted the verandah, a dozen yards away, then gave the word to fire. There was a single report, and when the smoke cleared away, five black faces lay grinning up at the pale moon.

Culberson could be prodigal with his negroes. He had promised them their freedom, and, to his way of thinking, freed negroes were no better than dead ones. He knew the garrison within was small, and he felt that five dead meant only five guns. He saw that anyone who reached the door was out of range from the window, which was along the same wall, and was also sheltered from above. His second party consisted of the entire fifteen, five of whom he knew would die. Five died: but the others reached the door, and the house soon shook with the blows of their axes. A few of the men also attacked the smaller door that led from the kitchen, with a similar assault.

"Miss Innisdale," Pressley suggested, "will you take the women into the hall and keep them there? You will be out of danger, and, even if we fall, they can have nothing against you."

Beatrice turned slowly away.

"My mistress," said Fanny Morgan, trying to detain her, "when your father and Major Pressley are mur-

dered, will you permit me to thrust that knife into your breast before I plunge it in my own?''

Innisdale turned a dark frown upon the girl, but before either he or Beatrice could answer, Pressley interrupted with a harsh laugh.

''You mistake her, Colonel,'' he said. ''That is not the melodrama it would seem. She alone of us all knows the purpose of these murderers, and, although she may not break her promise, she circumvents it as deftly as a European diplomat. She only means to inform us that you and I are slated for death, and your daughter for worse.''

Fanny Morgan smiled kindly at the Englishman.

''I could have told you as much,'' said Beatrice. ''I have been expecting this attack ever since Major Pressley's arrival.''

''You have?'' Pressley enquired.

''Yes, Major. The warrant for my father is only an excuse, though Culberson threatened us some time ago. It is you he is after.''

''Me? But why?''

''Because,'' Miss Innisdale answered slowly, ''Johnson Culberson is an Englishman of good family who came to Virginia some five years ago, and lives under an assumed name; because he is about thirty-five, is two inches taller than you and somewhat heavier; because he has a light, military bearing, regular features, black hair and sea-green eyes; and because he is an immoral, treacherous coward.''

''Heavens!'' gasped Pressley. ''It is Franklyn Everleigh.''

''It is Franklyn Everleigh,'' Beatrice nodded. ''I knew him from your description on the first evening of your visit.''

''By heaven, you are right,'' Innisdale interjected. ''I ought to have known him. I remember the interest he took in your proposed visit when we learnt of it, and it

was shortly afterwards that he took the step which he must have known could end only in his having to leave Innismount.''

''Franklyn Everleigh!'' Pressley repeated. ''It is best so. I have sought him over half the world.''

He had not long to brood over this new phase of the situation. The doors were slowly giving way to the blows of the axemen; and it was not yet twelve o'clock!

The moonlight streamed through as a plank was ripped away. The men stationed behind emptied their guns, picking off a third five of their assailants. They rammed the last charge in, fired again, then tossed their useless guns aside.

''Relight the candles,'' Pressley ordered. ''Their ammunition, too, is exhausted. What follows is desperate work; we must take no chances. Mr. Wilson, will you hold the rear door? It is narrow, and but one can attack. The colonel and I shall hold them at this. You will watch the shattered window, Mr. Walton; it is difficult to scale, and they will not attempt it if it is guarded. You other two gentlemen must act as reserves, and give aid wherever we are weakest.''

''Throw the door open,'' suggested Innisdale, as a second plank fell away. ''This debris but clutters our steps.''

The massive double-doors swung inwards with a jerk which precipitated two of the attackers into the room. They fell upon two naked swords, and sank to the ground. Their companions shrank back, awed.

''Not a step beyond, Colonel,'' Pressley warned. ''Here we may withstand an army, but only here.''

His eyes vainly searched the cowering group for the long-sought form of Everleigh.

''What coward leads these yapping dogs?'' he asked scornfully. ''Will he not advance like a man?''

There was no answer, save a low growl from the

baffled villains. Suddenly, Jack singled himself out for leadership.

"Come on," he yelled. "Eb'rybody togedder. Dem two can't stop we."

A massive white man sprang beside him, two others followed, then a couple of negroes. It was a reckless charge, against the two best swordsmen in Virginia. The foremost pair went down without an effort, the others made a fruitless stab at the empty air, then sulked back to join the muttering group on the verandah.

There came a sudden crash from the rear as the door gave way. The voice of the man they had known as Culberson rang above the sound of falling timber.

"We have them, men. Cut down the traitors. Give them no chance to flee."

The men rallied at the sound. They had heard that voice before, and seen a circle of Indian dead surround the sword he wielded. They fought like desperate fiends.

Seven charged the door at which the two men stood, stabbing with malignant fury. One tried to scale the shattered window Walton guarded. One followed at the leader's heels.

Wilson made a brave effort to hold the door. Everleigh tossed him aside with scornful contempt, almost severing his right arm with a single swing of his sword.

Ricks and Rockwell sprang into the breach. Everleigh eyed them with a sneer, struck their weapons from their feeble hands, and sent them crashing unconscious against the walls, Ricks with a mighty kick, and Rockwell with a blow of his fist. It was not these infirm creatures he had come to fight.

Of the seven who had stormed the wider door, but four remained. Innisdale threw a quick glance over his shoulder, and took in the situation in the pantry. He sprang round to meet Everleigh approaching twelve feet behind.

"Ah, Colonel," said the villain with chilling calm-

ness, "I've been longing to meet you. I'm wofully out of practice, and my arm is a little stiff. Easy, Colonel; you are a trifle excited."

Matthew Innisdale was one of the finest swordsmen Britain ever bred in an age when swordsmanship had attained its highest development. His one mistake was to underrate the skill of the man he faced. Whatever defects Franklyn Everleigh might have possessed, inefficiency with the sword was not one of them. Nothing but the colonel's cat-like swiftness of foot saved him when he lunged desperately, missed his opponent, and barely recovered in time to escape the lightning return. But he learnt quickly, and grew more cautious.

Everleigh, on the other hand, had long known the other's reputation, and took no chance. He fenced and parried with untiring patience, awaiting an opening which Innisdale never gave.

For ten long minutes their swords clashed, and buffeted each other, and reverberated back; but not a drop of blood was drawn. It became purely a game of endurance, and in this, the youth and weight and firmer muscles of the younger man must eventually claim the advantage. Innisdale saw this, and tried to hasten the end, but the other would not be drawn out.

It came at last, when Everleigh felt that his foe was sufficiently exhausted. He waited for the colonel's lunge, then, throwing all his massive strength and bulk into one desperate rush that shook the house, sent his point crashing into his victim's breast.

Innisdale recovered in time partly to divert the sword, but the abnormal weight behind that thrust was beyond his strength. The sword sank deep, yet it was the terrible rush than sent him huddled unconscious to the floor.

Everleigh coolly withdrew his sword, and stepped over the body of his latest victim. There was but one left,—besides the pale, terrified girl in the corner who held on

to Fanny Morgan's hand, crushed with sorrow and despair, yet too proud to sue for mercy of such a despicable foe.

Everleigh's eyes passed slowly from her to the Englishman at the door. Single-handed, he held four maddened rascals at his sword's end. They might not have been masters of the art, but they were desperate, and strong as he, and fighting for their lives. And they were four to one.

His unerring eyes seemed to sense every aim before it could materialize into a direct action; his nimble feet barely touched the ground as his lithe body darted here and there, escaping this edge, avoiding that deadly thrust, dashing this blow aside, striking that point to earth; hacking, slashing, skipping, parrying with untiring skill, knowing that a single slip, or a tardy muscle, meant, not alone his death, but all he cared for most. Several times he saw an opening for a fatal thrust: he dared not make it, lest some other weapon should pierce his marvellous defence before he could recover.

A clever cut sent one victim reeling against the wall, his sword-arm severed. Almost before the blow could be seen, he had struck aside two other points and sprung out of the way of a vicious slash.

Everleigh looked on mutely, admiration struggling with envy and hate. There was no hurry now. He stood ten feet behind his foe, who dared not turn his eyes in that direction;—his foe who, he knew, had sought him throughout England, and had come to Virginia in quest of his blood.

Twelve dolorous notes sounded from the clock,—the funeral dirge, it seemed, of all that was lovely and noble at Innismount. As the last melancholy sound died away, Fanny Morgan gripped tightly her mistress' arm, and glanced encouragingly up into her eyes. Beatrice could not translate the action: her ears were not as sharp as the girl's, her emotions stronger. But Everleigh, less

occupied, raised his head to listen. From the barely audible distance came the sound of hoof-beats in furious gallop. He knew what that sound meant: rescue. Rescue, while his foe still lived! There was no more time to waste.

With the cool deliberation that had characterized all his fiendish deeds, he slowly lifted his sword, aiming steadily at the back of the man so desperately pressed in front. For a single instant Pressley lighted on his feet as he made a deadly slash, and at that same instant Everleigh made the fatal thrust.

Beatrice saw the dastardly act and uttered a piercing scream, but it was too late to save the man she loved. For at that very moment Pressley's sword was deep in one of the villains' skull.

But Fanny Morgan had been coolly measuring the methodical aim. At the very moment when Everleigh lunged, she sprang;—sprang as the leopard leaps upon the prey that should never rise again; sprang as the mother rushes to embrace the long-lost babe she had given up for dead. Midway in air she met the glistening blade, and clasped it to her breast. It sank: sank deep and true: through black skin, and tense-nerved muscles, and noble heart. She huddled to the floor, a smile upon her lips, still clutching the weapon in her heart.

Pressley heard Miss Innisdale's shriek. He made a blind slash at the two rascals who still confronted him, while he threw a hasty glance behind. He understood. Everleigh had not yet disengaged his weapon. With one herculean swing he sent his sword at the head of the monster, and the body of Franklyn Everleigh, liar, coward and murderer, sank across that of the girl.

The Englishman turned again, but his last two foes had fled. He sprang over the headless body of his victim, raised the bleeding form of Innisdale, and tore the clothing from his breast. The wound was dangerous, but not deadly. The blow, partially parried, had struck

a rib, along which the point had been diverted, barely slashing away six inches of skin.

The colonel opened his eyes sheepishly, and at that instant Major Crawford sprang into the room, half-a-dozen dusty warriors at his heels.

"Am I too late?" he gasped.

There was no answer. The doctor, who had followed hard behind, bent over Innisdale. Pressley turned away.

"Where is Miss Innisdale?" he asked. "Is she hurt?"

"She carried the black girl upstairs," Walton answered. "I think she is dead."

Pressley mounted the stairs slowly. He found the door of Miss Innisdale's room open, and entered. On the snow-white bed reposed the still and motionless form of the negress. Beside the bed Miss Innisdale knelt, her face in her hands.

He did not speak. He knew the girl had saved his life.

Beatrice looked up. Her eyes were dry and sparkling. Her voice was harsh, almost cruel.

"It was your life or hers," she said. "She chose."

"I know." His words came huskily, as if some monster wrenched them from his heart. "May my life prove worth the sacrifice, and my end be not less noble."

Miss Innisdale rose. She bent over the still figure, gently parted the thin muslin above the dusky breast, and pulled out a necklace of soiled string, at the end of which dangled an English shilling.

"What is that?" gasped Pressley, seizing the coin and staring at the crude initials on it. "I gave that to the Princess of Kubanda!"

"Didn't you recognize her?"

"My God, how blind! I should have known. There could not be another such! You knew her?"

"She told me all when she saved my life in the wild Indian mountains long before you came," Miss Innisdale answered. "She made me promise never to repeat it while she lived."

"The Princess Ubaba!" Pressley mused, as though he did not hear. "A slave! Here! And never one kind word from me!"

He sank to his knees beside the bed, and his lips rested on the cold, damp hand that had been denied him in the wilds of Central Africa.

Beatrice walked silently from the room, and closed the door behind her. His sorrow was too holy for her eyes.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LAST TRIBUTE.

A bright spring sunshine bathed the dew-damp lawns and fragrant gardens of one of the loveliest mansions of Virginia. Within the house there was no sound. The breakfast table had been set, but no one touched the meal.

The lady who occupied the seat of honor was rather slight, with large, expressive black eyes, which held a softness that might have been mistaken for melancholy by one who had not seem her light-hearted happiness in the bosom of her family.

Beside her sat a little boy, hardly four years old, trim and erect, and, apparently, bursting with some information or enquiry which training had taught him to repress.

Across from the lady sat a gentleman,—a tall, soldierly figure, wearing a uniform that was unknown to the world a decade earlier.

The three sat in expectant silence. Presently a door opened, and a little old man entered. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and a small ridge of white powder on each shoulder grew higher whenever he moved his head. He bowed courteously to the three, but spoke no word.

The soldier pulled a letter from his pocket, and passed it to the elder man. He read the few lines to himself:

"My very dear friend,—I am sending this by a special messenger that it may reach you on the day of your departure. There is nothing I can say that I have not said before, yet I feel that one more assurance of my confidence and solicitude will not be amiss.

"Your position, as our first Ambassador to England,

is one full of difficulties; but I sincerely believe there is no other man in the country better able to re-establish cordial relations, to obliterate the bitterness of recent years, and to express to Europe what America stands for.

"Commend me to your lady, and to my god-son. That he will be a second edition of his worthy father, is the earnest prayer of

"Your sincere friend and companion in arms,

"G. WASHINGTON."

The old man folded the letter, and returned it to the owner without comment.

Steps were heard ascending the stairs. An aged negress entered. In her hand she bore a large garland of milk-white blossoms, their petals still heavy with dew. Behind her came a white-haired negro leaning heavily on a cane. A younger negro followed, erect and soldierly, on his arm a tiny bit of ribbon which, to one who knew, would indicate that he had been a trusted bearer of confidential dispatches in the continental army.

The trio ranged themselves before the door-way in respectful attention. The boy, as if it had been his daily task, sprang from his high chair, ran to the negress, and received the flowers.

He took them to his mother. She touched them lightly to her lips, and presented them to the soldier. He performed the same act, then returned them to the child.

The boy led the way down the stairs. The lady followed, next the soldier, then the old gentleman; while the negroes brought up the rear in the order in which they had entered.

The silent procession crossed the lawn, and halted beside a small mound partly concealed by lilies and oleanders and fragrant jasmine. The child laid the garland on the mound, and turned reverently away. The rest of the party silently followed,—all save the soldier.

His eyes slowly mounted a tall pole that stood at the

head of the mound, and paused for an instant, as if studying the tiny flag that floated from its staff,—a flag till then unknown in the annals of internationalism, with silver bars upon a red ground, and, in an upper corner, a circle of thirteen stars on a blue field.

His eyes sank again, and rested upon a shaft of black granite that stood beside the flag pole. He silently read the brief inscription it contained:

UBABA
PRINCESS OF KUBANDA
WHO GAVE HER LIFE
FOR
AMERICA.

THE END.

DEC 21 1923